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An Examination and Assessment of the Role and Status of Women in the ‘Holistic’

Ministry of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of
Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy
by Bekure Daba Bultum

7th April, 2011

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An Examination and Assessment of the Role and Status of Women in the 'Holistic' Ministry of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

Bekure Daba Bultum

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate and analyse the role and status of women in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) holistic ministry. Although since 1973 the EECMY has made some effort to support women's ministry by passing a number of different policy decisions to authorise women's involvement in different Church ministries, women are still silenced in various areas in ministry. The study, therefore, thoroughly examines and analyzes where, how and why women are silenced in the EECMY ministry. Findings from my fieldwork suggest a number of areas of ministry where women are silenced and demonstrate substantial reasons for this silencing. The study reveals that women are denied opportunity to participate fully in four key areas of decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordained ministry for theological and cultural reasons. The investigation shows that women experience exclusion through under-representation and restricted participation in various areas of EECMY's holistic ministry, but particularly in top leadership roles. Findings show that theological arguments are used to subordinate women with the effect that in the home, church and wider public spheres they are relegated to domestic rather than strategic roles.

The study then seeks to respond to these cultural and theological barriers which exclude women from ministry by proposing a theology that is inclusive and liberating. It does this by means of seminal texts and Gospel stories about women. Further, it directly challenges oppressive texts, such as 1 Cor. 14:34-35, 1 Tim. 2:11-15 and Gen. 2, 3, which are used to oppress women in ministry and legitimise men's authority over women and keep them in submission. By using liberative texts, such as 1 Cor. 11:5, Gal. 3:28 and Gen. 1:27, as lenses through which the other texts may be read, women can find a scriptural basis for their full involvement in the ministry of the Church using the gifts that God has given them.

In order to realize this vision, the thesis proposes adoption of a series of principles which emerge from the liberative texts, including conscientization, engendered theological education and partnership. Embracing these principles will lead women in the EECMY to develop and engage in practical strategies to gradually bring about positive change so that the barriers of patriarchy will be dismantled and women will achieve full representation and participation in public, strategic and valued areas of ministry.

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Introduction

The heart of my research is the role and status of women within the holistic ministry of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). In order to situate the research in its context I will provide relevant background to the country of Ethiopia, and to the EECMY, in which my research is located, and to its particular understanding of holistic ministry. I will introduce the subject of women in ministry in the EECMY and begin to open up their problems of status by explaining my use of the concept of silence. I will also introduce the particular public ministries of women on which I will focus attention, give the reasons for my choice and briefly explain these roles within the EECMY. I will also give a rationale for the thesis and set out my aims before introducing the different chapters.

0.1 Holistic Ministry

First, having used the EECMY's own term 'holistic' to describe its ministry, let me explain how and why the EECMY uses this word and considers it so important, and also how women are involved in this particular understanding of ministry. To understand ministry as 'holistic' means that a person cannot be divided arbitrarily as body and mind to be ministered to separately (EECMY 8th General Assembly 1973). The EECMY perceives the concept of 'holistic' as referring to the whole person (spirit, mind and body), and to their environment as well as the society in which the person lives. The concept of holistic ministry then demands that the Church¹ cater for an individual's social and economic, as well as spiritual needs. Indeed, holistic² ministry is a central part of the mission statement of the EECMY which is 'serving the whole person' (Mission Statement 2001, 2; EECMY Constitution, 2005, 7; Mulgeta, 2006, 3). The aim of the Church in this holistic ministry is to help people to overcome the barriers - social, economic and/or spiritual - that hinder their development (Alemu, 2006, 6; Mati, 2006, 2; Teshome, 2006, 3).

¹ I am using 'Church' to refer to the EECMY and I am using 'church' to refer to the universal 'church'.

² This is in accordance with its Constitution article five and May 1972 Official Document entitled 'On the interrelation between the Proclamation of the Gospel and Human Development' (EECMY-Mission statement (MS 2001:1).

Therefore, the EECMY is involved in proclaiming the gospel inviting people to respond to Christ's call to become disciples and also in providing humanitarian support to promote the physical, social, economic and environmental development of Ethiopian society through education, (by running schools), and by providing health services and integrated rural development to all synods (DASSC Report, 2005, Dhunfa, 2006, xi). This is seen most obviously in the names of the key departments of the EECMY which are found at national and at synod level: the departments for Mission and Theology (DMT) and Development and Social Service Commission (DASSC).

The Church, which depends on international support, has had to press its case strongly with donors for support of the spiritual ministries of evangelism and ordination because the focus of the donors has largely been limited to supporting development and social services for the last forty years. A strong letter³, written to all the donor agencies (1972) makes clear the nature and importance of holistic ministry for the EECMY. I quote the part of the letter where holistic needs are explained as follows:

‘...an integral human development, where spiritual and material needs are seen together, is the question in our society ...the division between witness and service or between proclamation and development...is .. harmful to the Church and will ultimately result in a distorted Christianity...The development of the inner person is a prerequisite for a healthy and lasting development of society’ (EECMY letter, 1972; Gudina, 2001, 36, 38-9; 2003, 78, 108; Bakke, 1987, 226).

Similarly, Gudina, the late General Secretary of the EECMY spelt out the holistic nature of what the gospel really meant for him by saying, ‘proclamation as we understand it, is based on Luke 4, where it states ‘the blind receive sight, the poor hear the good news, the oppressed are given liberty, ...’ (Gudina, 2003, 78, 108). For him, unless ministry includes both the spiritual and physical it cannot be a holistic ministry and the message of the gospel will not be completed. In order to make ministry holistic both dimensions should be integrated.

³ This is in accordance with both the EECMY Constitution Article 5 and the EECMY Mission Statement, *On the interrelation between the Proclamation of the Gospel and Human Development* (2001, 1).

0.2 The Choice of Ministerial Themes

The EECMY claims through its policy decisions to recognise women's involvement in all areas of holistic ministry and at all levels. However, my own experience suggests that the Church in fact excludes women from spiritual public representative ministries such as ordination and lay leadership. Furthermore, I suggest that the Church is failing to address the social needs of girls and women. It does not challenge the patriarchal culture which fails to support the education and physical well-being of girls and women. It also ignores the development of their 'inner person', and in this way contributes to the fact that women are largely absent from high status ministries such as decision-making and strategic planning. Instead the Church limits them to performing the private and more domestic social and physical services, such as teaching children, providing hospitality, caring for believers, and raising funds through manual labour in the fields. It is these roles of holistic ministry, the menial, physical and low status, that seem to me to be reserved for women rather than the public spiritual roles of Church leadership. I have therefore chosen to investigate women's representation and participation in four key areas of public ministry: decision-making, strategic planning for evangelism, lay leadership and ordained ministry in order to demonstrate how the patriarchal culture prevents women from fully participating in these particular areas of the EECMY's holistic ministry.

0.3 Rationale for the Study

Through my experience of EECMY as a woman and a synod president, I have observed that, although women are the majority of the members of the EECMY, they do not have a voice in the Church particularly in the four areas described above. I have observed from my own role in the EECMY that women are not sufficiently represented in its structures. For example, in general, women have little opportunity to be represented in the strategic roles of decision-making and policy making in evangelism. In addition, they are only very rarely involved in leadership and ordination. Therefore, I wanted through this thesis to explore and assess the reality of this perception, from the experience of women and men themselves, from the grass roots to the national level in the EECMY. I also wanted to study the literature on this subject and to learn from both African women theologians in other African countries

and also from western feminist theologians because there is often important congruency between the issues discussed in this literature and those raised by my fieldwork. It is important to note that my thesis is grounded in fieldwork.

I have referred in the paragraph above to my own experience of women not having a voice in the EECMY. This is a major theme in my work and I have chosen the language of silence to describe it because ‘silence’ best communicates the reality of what women experience in the EECMY. ‘Silence’ is a complex concept. It can be used to describe a variety of experiences of women within the EECMY. For example, I argue that women may be silenced by being refused the opportunity to speak or by being largely excluded from decision-making processes and from strategic policy and planning in evangelistic ministry, or by being excluded from leadership positions and from ordained ministries. I suggest that they are also silenced in a different way by their culture and the Church’s teaching. For example, they are taught not to speak in the company of men. Significantly, it seems that psychologically, they often live in a world of fear both in the home and in Church and society because they themselves have internalised the sexist and androcentric principles of their culture and of Christian teaching. They have also in many cases been silenced by traditional harmful practices. In addition, I suggest that women choose to remain silent, sometimes because they do not have the words or the confidence to speak out in public gatherings. Slee has recognised this in her book, *Praying like a Woman*, arguing that, ‘For women, there is often a struggle to come to speech and voice, to be able to say, with confidence and conviction’ (2004, 58; c.f. Oduyoye, 1995, 5). I also suggest that sometimes women choose to remain silent because they have been silenced on so many other occasions.

My experience here accords with feminist theory which recognises that silence is a central condition of women’s culture. Humm for example notes those women’s voices have gone unheard, masked by male power realities (Humm, 1995, 167). For her, the silence of women is found in patriarchal systems where men are resistant to change and this is certainly a key contributing factor to the silence of women as outlined in this thesis. It is identified as a feature of women’s position both within the church and the wider social context of Ethiopia. The realities of male power are the counterbalance to women’s silence as their power ensures that they are the ones who

make decisions and plans, control resources, speak in large public meetings and hold the positions of high status (c.f. Niguse, 1998, 3).

Another key descriptor of the silence of women is their ‘absence’ (Humm, 1995, 267, see also Lewis, 1993, 49), which, as I shall show, is central to women’s experience both literally (in that they are not physically present because they have been excluded) and metaphorically (even though present, they are treated as though they are absent). In silence, women experience themselves as voiceless and subject to the whims of authority (of men) (c.f. Belenky, 1986, 25). In describing the silence of women, I try to capture its complexity by using the cognate silent/ced in that ‘silent’ covers women’s choice to remain silent and also their deep-seated inability to speak, whereas ‘silenced’ covers all of those situations where women are prevented from speaking by men.

If, as I suspect, women are silent/ced then I want to give them a voice by listening to them by means of the fieldwork and by representing their voices in the thesis. Furthermore, I want to try to increase their representation and participation in decision-making meetings, in the ministry of evangelism, in lay leadership and in ordained ministry at all levels of the EECMY from the grassroots to the national level. I want to try to improve their situation by identifying new strategies which may bring further development in women’s ministry, both in the Church and society.

Although I shall demonstrate that women in ministry in the EECMY suffer under a patriarchal system, I do not intend to use the term ‘feminism’ in the thesis unless used by others to whose work I am referring. My reason for this is that the word ‘feminism’ is unhelpful in an Ethiopian context. It sounds a strident, divisive and western note that will not contribute to the retreat of patriarchy. The question of how African women theologians refer to themselves is undecided, but generally there is a view that the language of feminism is unAfrican, and also foreign to Ethiopians and speaks of western influence and values. In general, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians have also rejected the descriptor of feminist preferring the phrase African women theologians. Phiri, the current director of the Circle, writes that, ‘We do not want to be called feminist, because of its seeming neglect of race of and class, neither do we want to be called womanist because, as some have argued,

the experiences of African-American ‘women are different from those of African women’ (2006, 5). As an Ethiopian woman, I do not want to suggest that I am a feminist theologian for similar reasons. The term ‘feminist’ is new for women in Ethiopia and liable to carry connotations of western imposition. Moreover, since Ethiopian women are also members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians it would show partnership to use their description.

0.4. The Aim of the Thesis

The central aim of this project is to explore the nature of women’s current involvement in the holistic ministry of the EECMY. This draws on the experiences of women in the EECMY at every level, including my own personal experience, through observations, interviews, women’s stories and questionnaires supported by the resources of scripture and feminist Africa women’s scholarship. My hypothesis is that women are not represented in decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination in the holistic ministry of the EECMY (see chapter 2) and that the EECMY has not implemented its own policy decisions that were intended to improve the representation and participation of women.

The aims of the thesis can be summarised as follows:

- (1) To examine and assess women’s representation and participation in ministry in the EECMY through fieldwork, with particular reference to decision-making, evangelism, lay liturgical leadership and ordination.
- (2) To analyze and assess the effects of social and cultural practices, norms and values, and also the effects of traditional Christian practices, values and norms on women’s ministry.
- (3) To reflect critically on relevant literature in conversation with the experiences of women.
- (4) To identify workable strategies for the difficult task of transforming the representation and participation of women in holistic ministry of the EECMY
- (5) To use the findings for the benefit of the EECMY and my own ministerial practice.

0.5. Context: An Introduction to the EECMY and the Cultural Setting of Ethiopia

The key context for this work is the EECMY, the national evangelical Lutheran church, which works in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The wider context is Ethiopia and it is therefore important to have some understanding of Ethiopia, an African country that in some ways, as I shall explain, stands apart from other African countries. It is also necessary to understand the impact of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) on the culture, politics and life of Ethiopia and more narrowly its impact on the EECMY. In so far as it provides a necessary backdrop for the work I shall also provide some information about the country's history, geography, culture and economic life. I will introduce these matters here and other details in their relevant sections.

0.5.1. The EECMY

The EECMY has its origins in the missionary work of western evangelical Lutheran missionaries who first came to Ethiopia between 1936 and 1941. These particular missionaries were from Sweden and Germany and were involved in evangelism outreach in the western part of the country. They also proceeded to the south in order to extend the evangelism outreach. The Norwegian Lutheran missionaries arrived in the south in 1948 where they continued their engagement in evangelism (Bakke, 1987, 93-94).

At the end of the 19th century mainly Lutheran missionaries from Germany and Scandinavian countries brought the Gospel to the western part of Ethiopia, working with indigenous Ethiopian pioneers to plant an evangelical Lutheran church. The EECMY was established as the national Lutheran Church in 1959 (Eide, 1996, 101; 2000, 84; Abraham, 1995, 10; Bakke, 1987, 93). In 1959, when the EECMY was established as a national Church, its membership was only 20, 000. It is worth mentioning that currently, it is the largest Lutheran Church in Africa with 5,279,822 baptized members (EECMY Annual report, 2009 and statistics, 2009).

The EECMY became a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1974 and the World Council of Churches in 1979 (WCC) (Forsido, 1995, 22-23). It has a strong presence in the south and west, particularly in the western regions where western missionaries first preached the gospel. The area where the EECMY has least influence is the eastern part of Ethiopia, the area which is dominated by Islam.

As an evangelical Lutheran church the EECMY accepts that the Bible is the inspired word of God and teaches the true Word of God which leads to the salvation of Christ (EECMY Constitution, 2005, 12). Since the first Constitution was prepared in collaboration with the missionaries, it did not give any information about how to interpret the Bible, but rather continued the pattern of interpretation followed by the missionaries. The Bible was, therefore, seen as the source of doctrine, theology and ethics and the final authority for both doctrine and ethics (EECMY Constitution, 2005, Article 2, 8). Thus tradition and the missionaries hold the responsibility of the interpretation. As we shall see, interpretation of biblical texts is a significant issue in my analysis of the role of women in ministry in the EECMY.

The EECMY is different in two ways from other Lutheran Churches: first, the EECMY did not call itself by the name Lutheran but rather by the name '*Mekane Yesus*' which derives from the ancient Ethiopian language 'Ge'ez' and means the 'dwelling place of Jesus' (Forsido, 1995, 21). Second, as we have already noted, the missionaries made great efforts to develop the EECMY holistic ministry. However, as we shall see, they also inevitably brought a western theology that supports women's subordination and submission (c.f. Oduyoye, 1994, 1)

Historically women have been involved in the EECMY ministry, along with their male colleagues, from the earliest life of the Church, and without them the Church would not have grown and reached its present level (Yadasa, WM 2002, 79; Birri, 1986, 1). Many women, such as Aster Ganno Lidia Dimbo, Gumesh Wolde Michael and Nasise Liban, played equally significant roles with men in evangelistic outreach and in preaching the gospel from 1898 to 1904 (Aren, 1978, 392, 412, 431, 384-85; Birri, 2010, 7; Gurmessa, 2009, 189). Since then the western synod has continued to recognize the ministry of women in Church and society. History then, gives a significant witness to women's involvement in ministry showing that they were not

merely observers and listeners but also directly acted in the process of Church founding, establishment and growth.

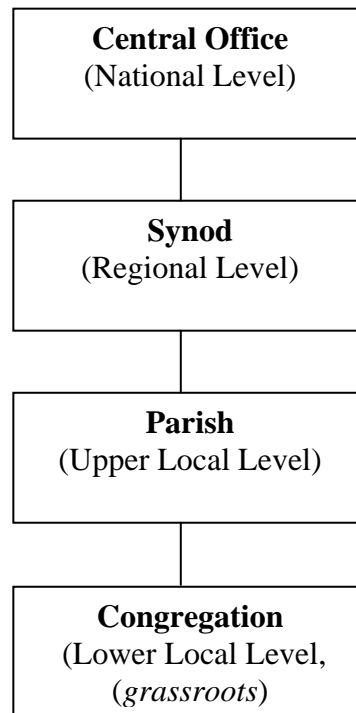
The EECMY has a synodical structure. The title which is used for the head of the Church and synods is 'president' not 'bishop'. The following 2009 EECMY statistics show the number of synods, established congregations and outreach areas as well as the membership: there are 6,644 established congregations and 2,818 preaching places (outreach areas which have not yet met the criteria to become congregations) and 21 Synods. There are 2,061 ordained pastors, 2,728 evangelists and some 300,000 voluntary persons actively involved in the mission work of the Church.

Given that my fieldwork will be conducted in a number of locations and at a number of levels (i.e. at local congregations, parish synod and national levels), it will be helpful to outline the organizational structure of the EECMY so that women's silence can be appropriately contextualised in relation to this. I will give a brief outline of the role of the Central Office, Synods, Parishes and congregations within the EECMY. It is also important to understand the EECMY's current policy on the participation of women within the EEMCY. As will be seen, this has changed over time so it is important to provide a clear sense of where the Church positions itself at present. Given this, I will also give an outline of the central policy decisions which have been made in relation to women's involvement in the Church, both historically and more recently.

Constitutionally, the organizational structure of the EECMY and its hierarchy is as follows: The Central Office administers the national and highest level, the Synod manages the regional level, the Parish manages the higher local level and the Congregation organises the local and lowest level (EECMY Constitution, 2001, 71; Furslund, 1993, 59-62). In order to make this clear I have provided a diagram of the four organisation levels of the Church on the next page.

Administratively, every Synod is accountable to the Central Office, every Parish is accountable to the Synod and every Congregation is accountable to its constituent Parish (see figure one above and the EECMY Revised Constitution 2005, 32, Article,

Figure1:
Organisation Structure of the
EECMY



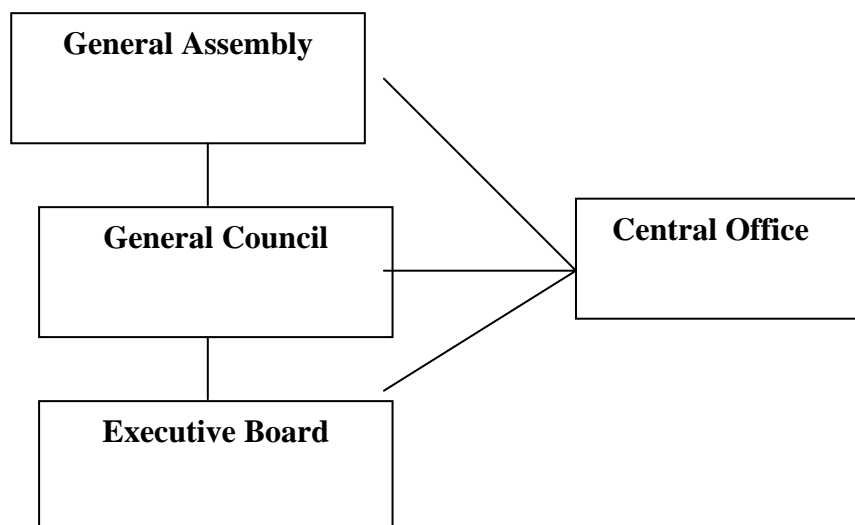
20, a-d). At each level the work of the Church is further divided into Departments (i.e., the Department of Evangelism, Development, Mission and Theology, Finance and Administration) through which decisions are implemented (Furslund, 1993, 59-62). The same is true for women's ministry, as it exists in all Church structures from the grassroots to the national levels. Women's ministry has been organized into committees at local levels (Parish and Congregation) and by Boards at national and regional levels (women's Guide, 2001, 27). However, as we shall see, its reporting structures are different and this can impact negatively on its effectiveness.

Part of the crucial work which is done by the Central Office, Synods, Parishes and Congregations is the work of decision-making. Although I will be drawing on this more specifically in relation to women's participation later in chapters 3 to 5, in order to get a fuller sense of the church's organizational structure, it is important to say a little about the areas of responsibility and the decision-making capacities related to each level of the EECMY's structure.

The three main decision-making bodies of the EECMY at national level are the General Assembly, the General Council and the Executive Board. The Central Office is responsible for carrying out the administrative work of these bodies including the

organization and follow up of national and international Church affairs (Furslund, 1993, 62; Constitutions, 2005, 17).

Figure 2:
Decision-making bodies
administered by the Central
Office



The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body and meets every four years to pass policy decisions and elect the Church's key leaders (i.e. President, Vice President and Treasurer) (EECCMY Constitution, 2005, 22-24; Furslund, 1993, 61). According to the Constitution, membership of the General Assembly should consist of 60% men and 40% women. In addition, 70% of the membership should be laity with clergy making up the remaining 30%. In this context, lay people constitute the majority in the highest decision-making bodies. The EECMY argues that this structure follows a 'bottom up' model rather than a 'top down' system because 60% of the voting members of the General Assembly are from the local grassroots (EECCMY Constitution, Article, 1b, 2005, 44; see Eide, 2000, 65). Each Synod Council elects the Council members of the EECMY from the members of the synod Council and sends them to the General Council of the EECMY. The representation depends on the size of the synod (EECCMY Constitution, Article, 4, 2005, 45).

The EECMY Council, the second highest decision-making body, meets once a year. At the meeting after the General Assembly it elects the General Secretary, the Associate General Secretary, the various Heads of Departments (e.g. Department for Mission and Theology, Finance, Development and Social Service Commission (DASSC) for a four-year period.

At the Central office of the EECMY almost all sections are headed by males and they also hold the top decision-making positions such as President, Vice-President,

General Secretary, and head of departments. There are only three sections headed by women, namely the Internal Audit section, Women in Evangelism section and Gender in Development section (EECMY Internal manual, 2005).

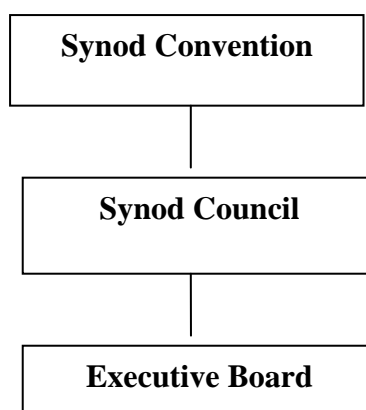
The Council also follows up the implementation of policy decisions of the Assembly (EECCMY Constitution, 2005, 24-27). This body gives directives to the National Executive Board (see below). The Council also establishes the Women's Board, which directly gives its report to the Council every year. The responsibility of the Women's Board is to follow up the policy decisions on women's involvement in ministry at all levels of the EECMY. The membership of the Women's Board includes seven women who are Church members but not employees of the EECMY and two women from the Women's Ministry Office who are not voting members (Women's Ministry Manual, 2007, 8).

The Executive Board is the third and final strand of the national decision-making body. It meets three times a year to follow up the implementation of the policy decisions and reports to the National Council via the General Secretary's report (EECCMY Constitution, 2005, 27-29). In theory, women's representation at all of the above meetings should be 40% but, as we shall see their representation is actually much lower.

The Synod is responsible for all activities within its area, although it must abide by the Constitution of the EECMY. For example, a key activity is that in general 'every Synod shall call to pastoral ministry and ordain in accordance with the Church regulation and rules' (EECMY revised Constitution, 2005, 27, Article.22, no.7;) The Synod also has three main decision-making bodies which function at regional level: Synod Convention, Synod Council and Executive Board.

Figure 3

Decision-making bodies at Synod level



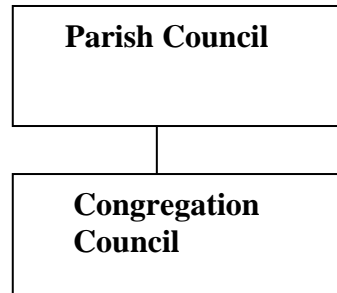
These operate in a similar way to the three national decision-making bodies. The Synod Convention meets once every four years to implement the national policy decisions and to elect the Synod's President, Vice President and the Treasurer. The Synod Council meets once a year and, following the Convention, elects the General Secretary of the Synod and the Heads of Departments for four years. Its main function is to implement policy decisions. This body follows up implementation of policy decisions from the Convention (EECMY Constitution, 2005, 29-32). The number of members and the relative numbers of men and women, as well as lay and ordained members, depends on the size of the Synod but follows the same pattern as that of the Central decision-making bodies (women's representation on the Synod Convention should be 40%). It can be seen as a positive development for women that the Women's Ministry Office of the Synod Central Office functions under the office of the General Secretary of the Synod and reports directly to the Synod Council once a year because women can bring their concerns directly to this body to be discussed (This arrangement is positive provided that the General Secretary is sympathetic to the participation of women in ministry).

The Executive Board is the third and final strand of the regional decision-making bodies; it meets three times a year to follow up the implementation of the policy decisions, and reports to the Synod Council via the General Secretary's report (EECMY Constitution, 2005, 29-32). Women's representation on this body is only ever four. However, the total membership of the Board depends on the number and size of the parishes of the different Synods.

The two main decision-making bodies at grassroots' level are Parish and Congregation Councils. The Parish Council meets every three months and, at its first meeting after the Synod Convention, elects a parish pastor for four years service and a Women's Committee. This committee is made up of five members for two years service at parish level. The Parish Council implements the policy decisions and reports to the Synod Council once a year. Women's representation on the Parish Council should be 40% of the total members (EECMY Women's Guide, 2001, 37). The Congregation Council meets twice a year and elects elders and Women's Committee members every two years. Women's membership of the Council should be 40% (EECMY Women's Guide, 2001, 27).

Figure 4:

Decision-making bodies
At Parish and Congregation levels



Women are represented in two ways in the organizational structure first, through the EECMY's mainstream structures of Central Office, synods, parishes and congregations, which I have just described. Second, women are represented and participate through a parallel structure of Women's Boards and Committees at the same levels of EECMY's structure, national, regional (synod), parish and congregation (*Women's Ministry Manual*, 2006). The structure appears to allow women to have a separate, focused voice on their own decision-making body. However, a number of aspects of the structure suggest that women's voices may in some respects be weakened by the structure itself. For example, according to the *Women's Ministry Guide*, (2001, 22), the national Women's Office is answerable to one man, the EECMY General Secretary; and the Synod Women's Ministry Office is answerable to the Executive Secretary at synod level. This does give women direct access to two of the most powerful people in the Central Office/synod. However, if either of these individuals is not sympathetic to women, then the only other provision is the second one described below. Second, although women have their own Women's Ministry Office in the capital Addis Ababa, this is staffed by only three women and the resources are meager particularly when compared to the resources for the mainstream structures. Further, although women have their own Board at national and synod levels, it comprises 9 women but only two of them are from the women's office and know and understand the information, gathered from the congregations and synods. The Women's Co-ordinators of the synods who do know the needs of women in their areas most directly have become excluded from this newly formed Board in line with the patterns of membership of all Boards. The promotion of women's ministry to the level of becoming a Board is good but its effect has been to exclude from its membership those with the knowledge of women's needs at grass-roots level and the commitment to serve them.

The EECMY National Women's Co-ordinator is the secretary of the Board without being a voting member (Women's Board terms of Reference, 2006). The reporting arrangements for the different women's boards and committees are to the level above them in the women's structure, thus, for example, the Congregation Women's Committee reports to the Parish Women's Committee and they in turn would report to the Synod Women's Board. This has the advantage of keeping issues among women, ensuring the reporting of all important matters because they are of interest to women, but also has the effect of marginalizing women's concerns rather than sharing them with the whole Church. However there is another route for reporting: the National Women's Board reports to the EECMY National Council once a year, providing an opportunity to introduce issues arising from women's experience. The same procedure applies at the other three levels of synod, parish and congregation.

In order to get a fuller sense of how women are actually involved in the EECMY and the extent of their representation, it is important to provide a brief overview of the EECMY's policy decisions surrounding the participation of women in ministry. This serves to record the Church's 'official' position and as such provides a necessary context for later discussions of my data.

The EECMY has made some effort to support women's ministry by passing a number of different policy decisions at different times in order to authorise, encourage and protect women's participation in different Church ministries. The first decision was made in 1973 by the 8th General Assembly to authorise the representation of women on decision-making bodies at all levels, which was to be 25% (General Assembly 1973). This issue was raised by a single woman who was the only female member on the Assembly meeting. After two decades, as already seen in chapter two, the second decision was made in 1993 by the 14th General Assembly and authorised an increase in the number of women delegates with voting rights on the General Assembly. The decision made was imprecise between 25% and 50% in order to ensure women would have a vote on policy matters. The policy decision says as follows: '...Directives will be made to ensure that women will be chosen or appointed in positions of authority and leadership in the various areas of the work of the Church' (14th EECMY General Assembly, 1994; see Women's Ministry Guide, 2002, 38-40). Had the maximum

permitted presently been implemented, then there would have been equal representation on the Church's key decision-making body. However, a subsequent resolution in 2005 reduced the maximum percentage of women's representation to 40% thereby establishing unequal representation on decision-making bodies within the very structures of the Church (Revised Constitution, 2005, 44, Article 4a).

More positively, the 15th General Assembly of 1997 passed a resolution on women's ordination which was new to the EECMY and to all the Christian churches of Ethiopia. It announced that '...Women who have received a call from God and from their congregations, who are qualified for the work, should be ordained and serve as a pastor' (EECMY General Assembly, 1997, Women's Ministry Guide, 2001, 71). These policy decisions are very important both for the EECMY and the Christian women within it. Notwithstanding the limit of 40%, they demonstrate that a level of inclusiveness is intended within EECMY structures in Church ministry at all levels.

0.5.2. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Having introduced the EECMY, it is necessary to make reference to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) since the EOC has had a significant influence on the EECMY and its growth. Firstly, it is worth mentioning that most of the EECMY members have come out of nominal membership of the EOC. Secondly, and particularly pertinent for this thesis, the cultures of the EOC and of Ethiopia as a nation are closely intertwined. Both are patriarchal and, as we shall see, these characteristics have had a significant detrimental influence on the ministry of women in the EECMY (Kasahun, 2003, 16).

The EOC has dominated the religion and culture of Ethiopia since the fourth century when Christianity first arrived in the country. It has a national membership of about thirty-five to forty million, whereas only three to eight million are members of protestant churches (Deressa, 2003, 8-9). An example of its patriarchal nature can be seen in its ancient and very traditional education system (Yadeta, 1999, 7; Kiros, 1991, 1,), which, according to Sadi, was planned to serve the needs of the Abyssinian rulers and the church (2003, 118). As Eide points out, this EOC school system was responsible for training only men, either to be priests for evangelism or for

administrative work (2000, 28-29). Aren is also clear that the 'orthodox church schools were for boys and not for girls' (1987, 318). The traditional (religious) EOC education in Ethiopia continues even today alongside the modern education system (Kiros, 1990, 1), perpetuating its patriarchal nature, which has not supported women in public ministry and continues to exclude women.

I myself came from an EOC background and was baptised into that church, but I did not go to church regularly since I did not understand what was happening in the services. The liturgical language was Ge'ez and the preaching was in Amharic, neither of which I was able to understand because my ethnic group and native language is Oromo. When I was at the High school (funded by my brother), I decided to join the EECMY because the gospel was preached in my mother tongue which made it easy to understand and to practise my faith. The approach of the EECMY was much more positive towards women than the EOC because even at that time, women were allowed to read the Bible to the congregation in the church service on Sundays. Thus, I was attracted by the EECMY ministry where women appeared to be more involved.

0. 5.3. Ethiopia

Ethiopia is situated in the Horn of Africa, bounded in the north-east by Eritrea and Djibouti, in the east and south east by Somalia, in the south by Kenya and in the west by the Sudan. It covers an area of about 1.2 million square kilometres, which makes it the tenth largest country in Africa (Yadeta, 1999, 2). In other words, Ethiopia covers approximately twice the area of Kenya and about five times the area of the United Kingdom (Briggs, 1995, 1). The Ethiopian population is approximately 83.1 million people (Human Development Report 2007/2008).

Although the many mountains and rivers in the country-side are beautiful, they create significant barriers for both evangelistic outreach and for travel to synods from the outlying countryside. Until recently, the infrastructure of the country was poor, partly because Ethiopia is unique in relation to its neighbours Sudan, Somalia and Kenya for it was not colonized by any of the western countries except for the 5 years of Italian occupation. One result of this has been a lack of modern infrastructure, but this is

being addressed by agreements with China and North Korea to build a series of main tarmac roads across the country.

The human geography of Ethiopia covers about 80 different ethnic groups belonging to Semitic, Cushitic and Nilotic backgrounds. The three major ethnic groups are Oromo (Cushitic), which is the largest, Amahara (Semitic), which is the next largest and Tigrayan (Semitic) which is the smallest of the three. There are about 85 different languages spoken in the country through which the EECMY communicates with its Churches.

In addition, there are various religious groups in Ethiopia of which the main ones are Christian and Muslim. Muslims have traditionally lived in the eastern part of Ethiopia, but in the last ten years there has been a policy among Muslims to spread into all regions of the country and to aim to have a mosque in every town and village. Christian denominations include the ancient EOC, which dominates the north of the country, and Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations, which both arrived by means of western missionaries from Europe of which the EECMY is one. These predominate in the west and south of the country (Deressa, 2003, 6). Although these different religious groups predominate in different areas, they can be found all over the country.

Ethiopia has been a federal democratic republic since 1995 following a period of transition which followed the fall of the Marxist junta called 'the Derg' in 1991. The Derg had ousted the Emperor Haile Selasse who had ruled the country from 1941-1974, supported by the British. Ethiopia then has experienced fifteen years of democratic rule. We may ask 'what can be said about women's role and status within Ethiopian politics during the periods described above'?

0.5.4. Women's Participation in Ethiopian Politics

I now want to give an insight into the status and role of women in Ethiopian culture in order to draw attention to the systemic nature of patriarchy in Ethiopian society. To do this I will look at politics, education, economic environment and health. The Ethiopian public, social and political domain for many centuries then has been defined and controlled by patriarchy, by the traditional imperial regimes, by tribal

leaders and by elite men (Zezelew, 2005, 3). In the past imperial regimes, as power was considered to be given from God to kings and since kings necessarily should be men, leadership and decision making was given primarily to men. However, those women who were the wives of the rulers or kings and those who had a blood relationship with royal families did participate in political leadership and decision-making either directly or indirectly (Zezelew, 2005, 3). For example, Taitu, the wife of Menilek, played an important role in attacking the Italians (1895-1896) (Deressa, 2003, 45). Additionally, it was Taitu who built churches in Ethiopia and also the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem (Deressa, 2003, 45). Historically, therefore, a few Ethiopian women with access to power have been involved in public and political affairs.

In modern Ethiopia, during Haile Selasse's regime (1931-1974), when a parliament came to exist for the first time in 1957, one woman was elected. In 1965, two women were elected and then in 1969, five women were officially elected as members of the parliament, even though the election was reserved for the EOC clergies, noblemen and high military personnel (Zezelew, 2005, 3). It was not in fact until the Marxist regime (the *Derg* 1974-1991), that the people of Ethiopia were formally taught the equality of all citizens irrespective of gender, religion, and nationality. It was the *Derg* that established associations for women at all levels. Yet, although the Ethiopian constitution of 1987 guaranteed women equal rights with men to elect and to be elected, women's participation in decision-making has not shown a significant change in provincial government.

When the present regime began its period of office, despite the fact that it seemed much better than past regimes in promoting the status of women, current research reveals that women have not yet exercised meaningful participation in top leadership and decision making bodies at federal and regional governance levels (Zezelew, 2005, 6). Owing to their lack of higher education, women have not been represented in a range of areas including political life. As Genene comments, even the very few women who are educated and hold senior positions and participate in executive meetings prefer to remain silent (Genene, 2003, 13). The effect of their lack of

representation and participation is a lack of women's influence in social, economic and political areas of Ethiopian society (Zegelew, 2005, 3).

Cultural perception continues to suggest that women are inferior to men (Meron, 2005, 14). This perception supports the attitude that women's proper place has always been, and still is, in the home and restricted within the family undertaking household duties, and rearing children. From childhood women are expected (and are accordingly brought up) to be 'good' (meaning subservient or submissive) housewives and mothers (Zegelew, 2005, 3) and thus to be subservient and submissive within these roles.

0.5.5 Education

According to historians such as Wagaw and Kiros, modern education in Ethiopia began during the reign of Menelik II (1889-1913) (Wagaw, 1979, 26; Kiros, 1990, 1; Yadeta, 1998, 7). This is supported by Sadi who pointed out that modern education was introduced in the 19th century (Sadi, 2003, 118). It was this modern education which partly opened up the way for western missionaries to encourage their education ministry within Ethiopia (Eide, 2000, 83-7) The coming of the western missionaries encouraged women's literacy in the North from the 1930s (Aren, 1987, 318). Aren writes, 'there were a few women who could read and write...women in general learnt nothing but spinning and running their household' (1987, 318, 336). Although advocating female literacy was revolutionary, as a result of the missionaries' encouragement, women's formal education was begun towards the end of the 1890s and continued, particularly in the west where missionaries were well accepted (Aren, 1987, 318).

Even after modern education (curriculum based) was introduced women did not gain the opportunity to access education. This is true for many Ethiopian women even today. Furthermore, Genene comments that, 'the lack of equal access to education... has also contributed towards the limited number of women involved in leadership' (2005, 6). The statistics on school enrolments illustrate this fact. For example out of the national Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 64. 4% for primary school in 2003/2004,

female enrolment constituted only 53. 8% while male enrolment was 74. 6% (Genene, 2005, 6). This improved in 2008 to 79% of girls and 85% of boys. However, only 52% of those children completed a full course of primary education (UNESCO, 2011). The situation is worse for secondary education. For example, the National Gross Enrolment Rate for secondary school was 19. 3% and, when broken down, was only 14. 3 % for girls and 10% higher for boys, at 24% (Genene, 6; Ashena, 2004, 7). Enrolment had improved significantly by 2008 to 33%, but the discrepancy between boys and girls remained, with 39% of boys enrolling but only 28% of girls. Enrolment for higher education is a stark 4%, of which males are 5% and females 2%. (UNESCO, 2011). The figures demonstrate the priority given to boys and young men in education. The significance of this for women in ministry will be discussed in chapter 5.

0.5.6. The Economic Environment

The main economic resource of Ethiopia is agriculture, which provides employment for 86% of the population (Mitiku, 1997, 5, Ashena, 1999, 23). Agriculture provides 50% of the Gross Domestic Product in which coffee is the main export. However, there are some other agricultural exports such as fruits, cotton and vegetables (Mitiku, 1997, 4, 2003, 6). Women are heavily involved in agricultural production and work longer hours than men, but have little access to credit or to loans (National Report, Ethiopia, 2004). As Hurisa observes, ‘income from the sale of milk, milk products and poultry are usually retained by women while major incomes by a higher level agricultural activities are men’s properties’ (2003, 17). The income from milk is not as high as in the UK because milk is not sold at all in the rural areas but given freely to those who are in need. Thus, milk in the country side does not bring any income for women and that is why it has become a source of money for women. According to Hurisa, it is the man who owns the property and women are obliged only to serve the family. Hurisa goes on to say that, ‘the rural policy on women has often concentrated on projects supposed to be traditional women’s work such as spinning, daily production, basketry...very few attempts have been made to introduce new sources of economic activities for women’ (2003, 18). Since 85% of Ethiopian people live in the rural areas, women are the majority who live in these areas and they are the most disadvantaged ones (Hurisa, 2003, 32). This lower income of women affects their health because they cannot afford to pay for medical fees.

Although Ethiopia is struggling with high unemployment, especially among its educated young adults, women are disadvantaged in both education and employment. The cause of this is that, on the one hand women have not gained adequate education, and on the other hand those who are educated are not treated as equals with their male counter parts for employment (Haile, 2006, 7).

0.5.7. Health

Women's health in Ethiopia is a serious problem. For example, as Yelibenwork Ayele states, 'every year, 381, 000 children in Ethiopia die before their 5th birthday. This includes 120,000 newborn babies. 26,000 women also die annually from complications in pregnancy' (www.ethiopianreporter.com/.../index.php?...ethiopia..mothers-health, 2010, Retrieved 17/02/2011).

The levels of maternal and infant mortality are among the highest in the world. The reason for poor health outcomes among women and children is the lack of modern health care services to each woman in Ethiopia (National Health Annual Report, 2003, Western Synod, Health Report, 2002). These reports clearly show the insufficiency of health care services within the country. Various studies in the 1990s showed that about 25% of Ethiopian women received antenatal care and fewer than 10% received professionally assisted delivery care (Belay, 1997, 23, Mekonnen, 1998, 34; Mengistu and James, 1996, 43). Despite the fact that the use of maternal health care services is vital for improving maternal and child health, little health care is available within Ethiopia.

Another serious issue that frequently affects women's health is the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This also has a close connection with contracting HIV/AIDS because of the unhygienic practices of the FMG practitioners when they have 'operated' on girls who have been infected by HIV (Yasune, 2006, 12). Although FGM is forbidden by law in Ethiopia, it is still practised because it is a deeply embedded patriarchal cultural practice which many people do not want to change (Ayana, 2004, 23). The task of improving women's health and life education is therefore a priority and forms part of the EECMY's holistic ministry. The EECMY

16th General Assembly passed a policy decision in 2001 to eradicate the practice of FGM. The decision is being implemented by some congregations to save future generations from this harmful practice.

0.6. Research Methods

Given the social predicament of women (as just identified) and the ‘holistic’ nature of ministry within the EECMY, my study is about exploring the relationship between women’s cultural position and women’s theological/ecclesiological position and about trying to engage constructively with this. Because I want to challenge established traditions of female silence within the EECMY, my thesis has at its centre a desire to listen to the voice of women in the Church and to take their contributions seriously. Given this, my project uses fieldwork to listen to and collect the voices of women. Specifically, I used qualitative and quantitative methods (interviews, participant observation and questionnaires); a mixed methods approach. I conducted fieldwork in six Synods of the EECMY in 2007 and 2008 for 12 weeks altogether. This provided the primary source of data collection for the fieldwork (which is discussed in chapters 3 to 5) while literature was an important supporting resource.

As well as drawing on findings from my fieldwork, I also engage with relevant literature to help inform my interpretations of the data to provoke questions about my findings. As we will see in the literature review (chapter 1) there is a gap in the literature on women in ministry in Ethiopia. Therefore scholarship from African women theologians are central resources. I also consult other selective literature from western feminists and make some small reference to womanist scholarship where this is useful for my work. Importantly, the fieldwork dictates the ways in which I draw on scholarship and this will become evident as the thesis unfolds.

0.7. The Plan of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into six chapters. The first chapter reviews relevant literature within the broader fields of African women’s theology and feminist theology. Given that this thesis explores the role and status of women within an Ethiopian

ecclesiological context and in relation to various areas of ministry, this review begins by outlining the meagre literature from Ethiopia itself on the subject of women's ministry, followed by relevant contributions from African women theologians on the same topic. It then moves to consider important contributions from wider afield, namely from within the western feminist theological community and to a lesser extent from womanist theologians, reflecting my own conviction that western feminist theology has something to offer to this study. My intention is to situate my thesis within the context of literature within the field of analysis and to make clear my proposed contribution to this field.

In the second chapter I set out and explain the Research Methodology for the fieldwork. I discuss its rationale, the sample (including locations) and the characteristics of the respondents. The chapter also identifies and explains the specific methods employed, how data was collected and how problems encountered were addressed. My own motivation and position in relation to this work are also described. Finally, the chapter evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the methods employed.

The third chapter is the first of three in which I report on the findings of the fieldwork. Chapters three and four deal with the ways in which women are silent/ced, with chapter three addressing the silence of women in decision-making and evangelism and chapter four addressing their silence in lay leadership and ordination. Chapter three shows how women are silenced both by their lack of representation on the Church's strategic decision-making bodies and by their lack of representation in managements posts in evangelism. Further, when women are present in meetings, they do not participate. The chapter explains how this happens in both verbal and non-verbal ways by women being told to be silent and by women being ignored. It also shows how sometimes women choose to be silent through lack of encouragement or because of the effect of a patriarchal culture on women's confidence and self-image.

The fourth chapter identifies and discusses how women are silenced in lay liturgical leadership and in ordination. I argue from the fieldwork data that most of the women in the EECMY who have sought such leadership have been excluded from these important ministries in the EECMY congregations by those in positions of power, who are almost always men who have rejected or denied women's call to ordained ministry and lay leadership. The chapter also considers the failure to communicate to rural congregations the opportunities for women to lead and to be ordained. A major finding of chapters 3 and 4 is that women are silenced by being permitted to exercise their roles only in more "private" contexts and by being excluded from more public responsibilities. Both chapters show that the silence of women relies in the first place on this kind of relegation and that this method is successful because women themselves often internalise and perpetuate this norm, choosing not to attend meetings at particular levels of the Church's organization.

The fifth chapter shifts the discussion from *how* women are silent/ced to the *reasons* for their silence in the EECMY. It highlights and distinguishes between cultural and theological reasons and highlights them as paramount. It analyses a number of reasons culturally why women are silenced, showing how, from birth to marriage, boys and men are privileged over girls and women in celebrations at birth, in domestic arrangements and in arrangements for marriage. It argues that women are inculturated into these traditions and accept that they are subordinate and second best. It argues that androcentrism silences women because it is the boys and men who are educated and trained for ministry and who have access to resources in the home and in the Church. It shows that sexism prevents women from being represented at meetings and, when a few are elected, sexism prevents them from participating fully, because it is assumed by the men, and sometimes by the women themselves, that women's role is in the private domestic sphere. The chapter shows that cultural patriarchy also abuses women through the tradition of FGM and the taboos of impurity, which some men argue exclude women from Church, on a monthly basis, and from ordination permanently.

The chapter also addresses the theological reasons for the silence of women in the EECMY. The evangelical nature of the EECMY means that it is biblical interpretations that largely determine their views. I argue that two New Testament texts in particular are used to silence women, 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14. These are cited by many male leaders in the EECMY to show that women should be quiet, and that they are prohibited from teaching in the church and from having any authority over men (Hurley, 1984, 132-133). In addition, I show how Genesis 2 and 3 have been used in the EECMY as a theological barrier against women's leadership and ordination. The former has been understood to show that woman was created second and should be subordinate to man and the latter has been understood to identify woman as a sinner for she disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. The chapter also addresses the influence of Luther on the Lutheran EECMY in that he followed the early church fathers in his interpretation of both Genesis 2 and 3, confirming women's subordination to men throughout their lives.

In chapter six I make a theological and practical response to the silencing of women. The theological response maintains that texts such as Galatians 3:28 and Genesis 1:27 liberate women from patriarchy into their full humanity. It also argues that there are different ways of reading and interpreting oppressive texts such as 1 Cor 14: 34-35 and 1 Tim 2:5-11 in relation to women's experience, which can negate their patriarchal impact. Moving then to address what a practical response to the silence of women might look like and to set about presenting workable practical strategies for change which are themselves grounded in the theological responses previously outlined, I point out the need for awareness raising and conscientization among women through different kinds of capacity building including more emphasis on women's groups at different levels and networking across levels and between regions for a variety of purposes. I consider the importance of partnership among women to build *koinonia* and solidarity with other women across the EECMY as well as with international women's groups and those men supportive to the cause of women in ministry.

Overall, therefore, this thesis seeks to argue that, although women in ministry in the EECMY are profoundly silenced in a range of different ways by cultural and

theological practice, values and belief, there is hope that over time they will, by working together to internalise liberative readings of scripture and by implementing practical strategies to empower themselves, find a strong voice and a full participation in ministry in the EECMY. It is hoped that the theological and practical strategies outlined might serve as an important step along the way towards improving the status and role of women in the EECMY.

Chapter One

The Marginalization of Women in Christian Ministry: A Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

This chapter aims to map the terrain of scholarship surrounding women's ministry and to outline key themes within the literature as they relate to the general field of women in ministry. It seeks to provide an overview of the literature which is most important for my journey through this thesis and to identify key places which must be visited along the way. These places are first and foremost the slight literature from Ethiopia. However, given that there is a lack of literature on the role and status of women in ministry in the EECMY and certainly there are no sustained studies, I need to select material from other literature that will help me interpret my own data from the fieldwork and reflect theologically on it. The second key body of literature is that from African women theologians, since these contributions are the most pertinent and relevant to my context from a broader African context. The review at this point focuses primarily on the literature which has come out of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter referred to as the Circle). There has been a concerted effort by the Circle in the last twenty years to encourage and publish research by women on the situation of women in Africa. Finally, I turn to the literature presented by feminist theologians from the west. Reviewing key contributions from white western feminist theologians is crucial because women's approaches to women's ministry in Ethiopia have been imported from Western Europe and North American as we shall see in the work of Birri and also from the work of African Women theologians. Moreover, I need to use the work of western feminist theologians in order to fill gaps which exist in the literature.

1.1 Literature from Ethiopia

The literature review begins by identifying, examining and assessing the significance for my study of the very small amount that has been written by Ethiopians. This amounts to reports by the EECMY, two MA dissertations, both by men, and some relevant historical background by one Ethiopian woman who has lived in the United States for thirty years and by two white western missionaries who worked in Ethiopia for thirty years. Although the EECMY has been working with the western

missionaries for many years, and a number of individual Ethiopians have been sponsored to do research, no one has included women's ministry in their work at doctoral level until my own research. Additionally there is a report of proceedings of a workshop on 'Women in Leadership and Decision-making', although the context is largely political leadership. Nevertheless, as we shall see, it offers some helpful insights on the reasons for women's marginalization which can inform my work.

I will begin with the very limited literature from Ethiopian authors. Debela Birri wrote his Masters Thesis in the USA on '*Women and ministry in the New Testament Letters: Ordain Them or Not?*' (1986). He wrote from a male perspective but he is a supportive of women's ministry and has a great desire to promote it within the EECMY. Birri's dissertation centred on critical exegesis of two key passages which have been used in arguments against the ordination of women: 1Cor.14: 34-35 and 1Tim. 2: 11-14. He argued that the texts used in conjunction with others do not forbid the ordination of women. Thus, he suggests that 'to prohibit women from entering the ordained ministry of the church, simply because they are women, is to deny them the privilege and responsibility given to them by Christ in their baptism' (1986, 161). According to Birri, Christian ministry is based on God's call to ministry which women claim that they, like men, receive through baptism.

Birri emphasises God's call to ministry by saying, 'God calls whom God wishes and that is not limited to men only, but extends to women also' (1986, 162). He argues that the calling of God for ordained ministry does not depend on gender but on gifts that the individual has received for ordained ministry. He goes on to say that 'experience shows that where women have been ordained the churches have been blessed by the new perspective that women have brought into the ordained ministry' (1986, 162).

Birri's work is based on exegesis which is largely dependent on that of prominent feminist theologians from the west (1986, ix), which he then relates to the Ethiopian context of the EECMY. His work is limited for my needs in three ways. First, his work is theoretical; he did not use fieldwork and his research therefore lacks the contribution of the women in the EECMY. Second, it lacks the contribution of African women theologians which is important because they are close to the Ethiopian context. Third, I will need to access the work of western feminist

theologians myself, rather than work through secondary literature. Birri is dedicated to supporting the ordination of women in his Church the EECMY and his work is the first of its kind to be written on women's ministry, and the most sustained contribution so far. There are, however some differences between my work and Birri's since he used only secondary sources and focused on only one area of ministry, women's ordination. In contrast, my work focuses on the four areas of ministry, decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination in which my primary source is fieldwork with supporting secondary sources.

The other work to which I refer is Melkamu Dunfa's Master's dissertation on *the Roles and Status of women in holistic services of the EECMY in the Three Weredas⁴ of the Western Wallaga Zone* (2007). His dissertation is based on fieldwork undertaken in part of the western region which includes both Birbir Dila, and the Western synods (2007, iii). Dunfa's work includes investigation into both the spiritual and social contributions of women in the holistic ministry of the EECMY. Some of his fieldwork was undertaken in the Lalo Aira Hospital run by the EECMY. He discovered that because women were assigned to be ordinary workers rather than higher level medical doctors they were not involved in any form of leadership of the hospital at a managerial or decision-making level (2007, 58). Having seen the imbalance of power sharing between men and women, he concluded that there was exclusion of women in decision-making at the hospital. In his research on women's spiritual contribution to ordained ministry in the Birbir Dila and Western Synods Dunfa reported that there were only 8 women ordained between 2000 and 2007 (2007, 42, 46). He concluded that although women are the majority in the Church their participation in the ordained ministry is insufficient. However, he also reported that the first ordained woman in the EECMY who was from one of the western synods became the head of the evangelism department a year after her ordination, a post which previously had been held only by men.

Dunfa's work focuses more on the ministry of women in health and education and less on the public representative spiritual ministry. Nevertheless his observations that women in health and education ministries do not hold positions in which they can

⁴ *Wereda* is Oromo and means 'district'.

contribute to strategic decision-making is significant for my study, because it suggests that the problem of marginalisation may be the same in every department of the EECMY. Secondly, Dunfa's research is limited to two synods although there is overlap in one case between his choice of synod and mine. Thirdly, Dunfa's work does not include any consideration of theological perspectives because his focus was on educational and health, and ordained ministry was a secondary concern. He also omitted any reference to the cultural issues affecting women's ministry. However, I think there will be some minor contributions to my thesis from his work. His work on the exclusion of women from ordination may support my findings and His finding that within the western Synods, ordination does have some connection with promotion to top managerial leadership may also be significant for my work.

Abdeta's Bachelor of Theology dissertation examines the cultural and theological barriers for women's involvement in ordained ministry (2002, 8-9). She also reflects on the exclusion of women in ministry in decision-making, saying that 'women have not had a chance to develop their top managerial leadership capacity' (2002, 4). According to her, women's exclusion from decision-making is not that women lack the capacity to become managers but that they have not had any opportunity for inclusion since there is no encouragement for them to seek inclusion in this area of ministry. Since her work deals with both ordination and decision-making, I can use it for comparison with my own findings.

The '*Women's Ministry Guide*' (2001), written by female staff in the EECMY's Central Office contains information on women's ministry at all levels. It is not an academic book and lacks any critical argument on women's ministry. Nevertheless, since the book contains much information on women's ministry at all levels it will be very helpful as a reference for facts and statistics. It is also the work of the women's coordination office whose experience is invaluable for critical analysis.

Belletech Deressa, an Ethiopian woman living in the USA since 1980, describes Oromo women's history in Ethiopia in her book *Oromittii: The Forgotten Women in Ethiopian History* (2003). Because her work is on the history of Ethiopian women's involvement in politics and evangelism and the focus of my work, apart from background, is on the contemporary situation, it is only marginally relevant. She does

however, note that women are absent from decision-making bodies and argues that the EOC is completely silent on the subject of women's ordination. She says, 'women's participation in leadership and decision-making in church is limited. Women's ordination to priesthood is unheard of in the EOC' (2003, 26) and notes that other church denominations in Ethiopia, such as the EECMY, are influenced by the EOC on this matter.

The work of Gustav Aren a Swedish missionary (*Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia* (1976) is similarly historical and therefore not centrally relevant to my thesis. He shows how many women were engaged in evangelistic ministry together with their husbands. For example, he quotes the case of Aster Gano who translated the Bible into the Oromo language and brought the gospel to Wallega in 1893 (1986, 384). In his work he writes of the many women who were engaged in hand crafts and basket work in order to support the evangelistic outreach. However, although, Aren shows how the gospel was spread in Ethiopia, his work does not directly fit my project because my project deals with the contemporary role and status of women in the ministry of the EECMY. The work of Aren was relevant for the historical section on growth of the EECMY and women's early ministry (see introduction).

Bakke, a Norwegian missionary, in his book *Christian Ministry* (1987), limits his consideration of women's ministry to a single paragraph. Since Bakke was a Principal of the EECMY Seminary for a long time, and involved in the training of women students (I myself am one of his students), he could have written much more than he did on their participation in ministry. However, since Bakke was from the Norwegian evangelical Lutheran missionary background, one of the churches which has not supported women's ministry, it is probable that he was not interested in writing about women's ministry in the EECMY. However, his description of the contribution of Nasise Liban who was a dedicated evangelist will be of use in my work.

A further source of information and argument comes from a paper by Mintewab Zelelew on an Ethiopian perspective on leadership and decision-making presented at a workshop entitled, 'Women in Leadership and Decision-Making', organized by

the National Gender Forum of the NGOs belonging to the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), held in Addis Ababa in 2005, and relating to women's lack of involvement in politics. She argued that the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives in decision-making is essential as a matter of equality (women are 50% of the population), as a matter of law (their full participation in politics is enshrined in law), and because involving women in decision-making will not only lead to creative solutions, but will also result in choosing priorities for development that are appropriate for women specifically (Zegelew, 2005, 8-10).

She also identified the barriers which prevent women from participating in decision-making. She argues that they lack experience of decision-making because it is not traditionally their role. They therefore have had no practice in making decisions and have been socialized to believe that their place is in the home where decisions are made by men. Thus, most women do not have any ambition to take positions of leadership. Additionally, she argues that if women do achieve these positions, they find themselves isolated and marginalised by unsupportive male colleagues (Zegelew, 2005, 11). Most women, however, find that the daily struggle against poverty is enough for them. Hirut similarly asks how can a woman who already shoulders the responsibilities of the home child-rearing, food processing and marketing, and looking after animals find time to enter the realms of decision-making after 13-15 hours per day of hard manual labour (2000, 24-25; c.f. Abate, 2006, 13, Gorge, 1994, 7)? Zegelew argues that the majority of women cannot even think of a position outside the home, and those against whom there has been violence 'can't ever dream of participating in leadership' (Zegelew, 2005, 12). The final barrier to inclusion in decision-making and leadership identified by Zegelew is lack of access to education, so that women do not have the necessary knowledge or qualifications to be considered for leadership, and, she argues, women need qualifications more than men to gain access to male-dominated positions of power (Zegelew, 2005, 12). Although Zegelew is writing about women's participation in the political sphere in Ethiopia, her arguments resonate with the experience that I bring to this study and in particular with the evidence of a number of women I observed in senior managerial roles in ministry in the EECMY. The barriers that she identifies and the justifications

that she gives for women's involvement in leadership and decision-making will be helpful to me in interpreting my data from the fieldwork.

It is clear, however, from this survey just how little literature there is on my subject in Ethiopia. The most significant work is that from Birri and Dunfa, in that they both focus on women's ministry in the EECMY. Birri's application of western feminist New Testament scholarship to the ordination of women in the EECMY and Dunfa's fieldwork demonstrating the marginalization of women in leadership and decision making in health and education ministries of women in the EECMY are pertinent to my study, as are the arguments from Zelelew. The scarcity of the resources, however, demonstrates the need for a work such as mine, and also for an appeal to the work of other Africa women theologians, to whose work I now turn.

1.2 African Woman Theologians

1.2.1 Introduction

In this section I review the literature by African women theologians in order to identify, analyse and evaluate how their work may fill the significant gap in literature on women in ministry in Ethiopia from an African perspective. Within the African continent, there has been significant development in women's theology in the last twenty five years largely through the work of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter referred to as 'the Circle'), founded in 1989 by Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Phirri, 2006, 25). African women theologians formed themselves into the Circle for a number of reasons: first to create a community of African women theologians rather than focussing on individuality (Oduyoye, 2001, 17); second to engage in and to publish, research on women in Africa from an African perspective; third to expose the ideological base of Christianity in Africa that maintains and justifies the oppression of women. They also attempt to suggest ways in which the place of women in church and society in Africa can be transformed and women can be empowered for liberation (Phiri, 2004, 22). The Circle refer to their theological reflection on their contexts and their faith as 'African theologies' rather than African theology, because they recognise that these theologies, which come out of a range of experiences from different African contexts, are different from one another. Phiri, for example recognises the uniqueness of different experiences 'due to

differences in race, culture, politics, economy and religion' (Phiri, 2004,17, Kasamo, 2011, 155). Working from experience is a basic criterion of the Circle (Kasomo and Maseno, 2011,156) and of all liberation and feminist theologies, yet many of these African women theologians prefer the latter title to the title of feminist, for reasons already discussed (Kasomo and Maseno, 2011,155). Although they are concerned as women theologians with women's issues, a further aim is to establish authentic cooperation and mutuality between women and men over against patriarchy (Kasomo, 2011, 156).

Having provided an overview of the aims and purposes of the Circle, I now consider key themes which emerge from their literature which resonate with the concerns of my thesis for women in ministry. Frederiks argues that the two overarching themes that emerge from their literature are culture and religion (2003, 74). With respect to culture, she identifies the theme as cultural hermeneutics, nuanced by Kanyoro as 'gender-sensitive' or 'engendering' cultural hermeneutics' (2003, 74; Kanyoro, 2002, 79; c.f. Oduyoye 2001,17). Frederiks and Kasomo and Maseno recognise that there is an emphasis on affirming what is good in culture and criticising what is oppressive. (Frederiks, 2003, 75; c.f. Kasomo and Maseno, 2011, 156). This includes identifying and challenging those numerous negative elements of culture that at worst do violence to women and at best marginalise and relegate them to domesticity. Frederiks also recognises the work of the Circle in highlighting and using positive elements of culture such as 'storytelling', which are important to my work, and also the use of an African country's myths and traditional stories (2003, 75; Kasomo and Massena, 2011, 156), which I have not used because of the narrower theological confines of my evangelical tradition, which I wish to honour.

Frederiks notes that the second key theme, religion, has two branches in the Circle; the first is the attempt to recover women's contribution to African Church History. Some small part of this literature provides relevant background to Ethiopian women in the church, but it is the second larger strand of biblical interpretation which is more important for my work. Most African woman theologians have the Bible as their main source of theology but, like western feminists they too have found that the text and traditions are oppressive and patriarchal including the context in which it was written (Okure, 1994, 78, Kasomo and Maseno, 2011, 156). It is their work on

and their choice of hermeneutical criteria for studying the biblical texts which help me recognise the hermeneutical criteria being used by the women in my studies (Frederiks, 2003, 78).

1.2.2 Cultural Hermeneutics

The dominant theme of cultural hermeneutics in the work of many African women theologians such as Oduyoye and Kanyoro provides a very important resource for understanding the silence of women in ministry. Although there has been an equal emphasis in the literature on affirming and using what is positive in culture (Oduyoye, 2001, 13), its primary importance for me lies in its analysis of oppressive traditions and practices in African culture, many of which are directly relevant also to Ethiopian culture. In reading the literature on cultural hermeneutics, it also becomes clear how closely this is related to religion. As Kanyoro says, ‘There is no sphere of existence that is excluded from the double grip of culture and religion’ (Kanyoro, 2001, 159). This insight is also important for my work for it indicates the overlap between culture and religion.

Although it may be difficult to identify clear references in the literature on cultural hermeneutics to women in ministry, and even more so to my four chosen themes, much of what is written is directly relevant to creating that culture of silence in which women minister and of which they themselves form a part. For example, Oduyoye refers to the dilemmas for African women of being the custodians of cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage, that are harmful (Kanyoro, 2001, 159; c.f. Frederiks, 2003, 75). Both women’s dilemma and the cultural practices themselves illustrate their ‘powerlessness and vulnerability’ (Kanyoro, 2001, 160). An important response to such powerlessness has been the engendering of cultural hermeneutics by women evaluating culture from their own perspective. It has been liberating for women, for example, to write about sexuality, to engender it, by voicing their perspectives (Kanyoro, 2001, 172). Similarly, my own research method of fieldwork gives voice to women’s perspectives, and therefore in a small way is providing an engendered cultural hermeneutic of women in ministry in the EECMY. However, to break through such cultural barriers is very difficult indeed, so that although women may write about

sexuality, to cling on to oppressive practices such as traditional marriage as a source of dignity is tempting, even though the practice is questionable (Oduyoye, 2001, 14).

Oduyoye similarly writes of breaking the silence in relation to patriarchal culture and religion:

Any strategy for greater power must be accompanied by 'voicing' for if we ourselves do not deliberately attempt to break the silence about our situation as African women, others will continue to maintain it (2005, 170).

Oduyoye argues further that neither men nor women should trivialise such patriarchal attitudes but rather challenge them because women are equally human (2005, 171). Currently, Oduyoye finds a significant silence among women with reference to a range of issues. For example, she writes that attitudes to women's education, vocations and interpretation of marriage lead them to interpret their own role of helper (Gen. 2:18) as subordinate (2005, 176). Similarly women have accepted their various roles based on a complementarian understanding of equality which assigns and confines them to subordinate, domestic roles chosen for them by men (2005, 177). Additionally, with reference to decision-making, Oduyoye argues, 'the men's group really does exist: it is the church's decision-ruling body to which women and young people must be represented so their presence in the pews will not be ignored altogether' (2005, 186).

Kanyoro and Oduyoye's work on cultural hermeneutics is important for my work because they recognise that all questions about the welfare and status of women are explained within a cultural framework. For example, Kanyoro writes, 'women may not participate in leadership because culturally it is the domain of men' (2001, 164). A cultural tradition such as this affects not only the society but also the church because the church, while being critical of the culture is also part of its analysis. It follows that 'The status of women within the church is a microcosm of their status within the society of which the church is a part' (Kanyoro, 2001, 164). What applies to women in the church necessarily also applies to women in ministry since culture is all pervasive. Thus, culturally, women in ministry also may not participate in leadership, even when they are ordained.

1.2.3 Biblical Hermeneutics

It is important in thinking about the interpretation of the Bible for African women theologians to remember that it is their main source of theology. Oduyoye argues that the influence of African culture allows women to view the Bible through African eyes (2001, 12). Indeed, Kanyoro argues that ‘the culture of the reader has more influence on reading the Bible than the historical culture of the text’ (2001, 165). It is easy for this to happen because the culture of the Bible resonates with African cultures, because they are both deeply patriarchal which then results in a double oppression of Christians of African and biblical cultures. Oduyoye encourages women to recognise the culture in which the Bible was written and to view it with the same caution as their own culture because of its patriarchal context and its oppressive traditions towards women (2001, 12; 2005, 190; Frederiks, 2003, 78). Nevertheless, it seems possible to find liberative texts in the Bible. Thus, Kanyoro argues that, ‘we can read and interpret the Bible by ourselves and we can count on God’s Word that says God created men and women in God’s own image (Gen. 1: 27)’ (2002, 91). This shows that although there are oppressive texts in the Bible there are also texts which can be used as a lens to read oppressive texts. This will be helpful for my discussion in chapter 6.

African women theologians offer a range of criteria for hermeneutical interpretation of oppressive texts. For example, Okure and Oduyoye choose a criterion of liberation arguing that liberative elements provide a divine perspective and oppressive elements a human perspective. For example, Oduyoye writes, ‘Any interpretation of the Bible is unacceptable if it does harm to women, to the vulnerable and the voiceless’ (2001, 12). Others have chosen the well-being of women as a criterion. This has been understood in various ways, such as Masenya’s use of the Sotho word *bosadi*, expressing womanhood and woman’s well-being (in Frederiks, 2003, 78). Yet others have abandoned the present canon of scripture, for example Landmann in her preference for gnostic Nag Hamadi texts (in Frederiks, 2003, 79). However, given my roots in the EECMY, and its conservative evangelical nature, I have chosen those ways of reading that remain positive to the Bible and stem from the canon itself. Another reason for adopting a hermeneutic based on the Bible is given by Maluleke in his criticism of alternative methods of biblical hermeneutics, rightly arguing that methods must not be elitist, but rather helpful to uneducated, semi-literate, oppressed

and marginalized women in rural areas in providing a usable tool for reading the Bible (Frederiks, 2001, 81). In Ethiopia there are many Bible study groups in rural areas. Methods of study involving listening to oppressive stories and teaching in the light of liberating stories and texts is a better way forward for such people, and indeed for theologically educated women in ministry in the context of the EECMY. Okure argues that a key method of Biblical study of this kind begins from a women's situation and experience in their culture and society which is described and critically analysed with reference to the Biblical text, for example, how Jesus and women in the Bible handled such situations (c.f. Oduyoye, 2005, 192). The relevant portion of scripture is read or told and then discussed to discover how women might think and act in their situations in a different way (Kasomo and Maseno, 2011, 157; c.f. Oduyoye, 2005, 191). Another key theme of the Circle to promote change is in the area of theological education, which includes both increasing access to it and developing its character to include women's perspectives (see chapter 6).

1.2.4 Engendered Theological Education

In a keynote address, Phiri summarised the challenge to African women theologians of women's theological education (1989-2008) under four headings as, redefining the identity of African Women Theologians (AWTs), promoting more women to study theology and more women to become permanent staff, the inclusion of African women theologians within the theological curriculum and the collaboration of women with sympathetic male colleagues (2008, 1). She was of course writing of theological education in its widest context and argued that the redefinition had led to a far greater breadth in the work of the Circle to include for example practitioners and women with lower qualification and church women without any theological qualifications (Phiri, 2008, 3f). She also made plain the many barriers that African women seeking theological education face; first its link with ordination training and the exclusion of women from ordination, next the lower qualifications offered to women and their lower status in roles under male leadership on completion of their studies. Then, women who prefer to study by Theological Education by Extension (TEE), because it is cheaper and allows them to remain at home, find that TEE qualifications are not recognised by their churches. There is also a significant limitation on scholarships for women and even when granted, men in power sometimes refuse the grant. In the case of staff recruitment, those women employed,

often do not teach theology, or if they do, have only part-time or temporary contracts (Phiri, 2008, 7f). Phiri's analysis is helpful to me in a number of ways; first, the knowledge that the Circle offers support at a range of levels for women theologians; second her analysis of the barriers to theological education assures me that women in ministry in the EECMY seeking theological education are not alone in their problems with access and the ways in which they are treated as they seek access to ordination and to positions of authority in decision-making alongside men (see chapters 3-5).

Haddad responds to the challenges raised by Phiri by arguing for a change in women's training for ministry. Oduyoye describes training institutions as, 'male-run theological factories where the ecclesiastical organisation imprints its stamp on all who pass through' (2005, 182). Phiri must recognise something of what Oduyoye is arguing when she writes, 'a contextual and relevant theological education needs to be engendered' (2003, 65). She means by this firstly that there needs to be a transformation of the hierarchical and male-dominated structures in seminaries because they provide only male models of ministerial formation, in favour of more women staff and students, so that woman's staff can provide models of ministerial formation which include collaborative working (Haddad, 2003, 70). She argues that raising the number of women students is important for introducing women's experience into the classroom and for a 'heightened and more sensitive approach to gender issues within the institution' (Haddad, 2003, 71). In order to achieve this she refers to fund-raising for the provision of bursaries for women by theological institutions. Haddad argues from the basis of fieldwork in three theological institutions in Pietermaritzburg that an increase in women students led to informal peer conversations with women outside lecture time which added a crucial dimension to men's theological formation, including hearing women preach during chapel, and leading to deeper positive reflection on the role of women in leadership in ministry (Haddad, 2003, 71). Haddad's practice-based research is significant for my own work in that she is able to demonstrate that changes in practice such as an increase in numbers and appointing women staff can make a significant difference to both women and men. Her work therefore provides encouragement that realistic practical responses to the training of women for ordained ministry and lay leadership in the EECMY can also yield positive results.

Haddad presents a greater challenge when she argues for the engendering of the curriculum for theological education. Whereas others have argued for whole programmes on gender, and this may have a place in universities (Hinga, 2002, 80), and Phiri has argued for engendering all elements of the curriculum and offering electives at all three levels of education (Phiri, 2008, 11), Haddad confines herself to arguing in ministerial training for at least one module in women's theology and another in gender awareness (2003, 73). She also sees a place for including women's perspectives, for example in Biblical Studies to redress the balance from studying a male oriented biblical canon (Haddad, 2003, 65). Haddad recommends caution in building capacity for structural change, but she commends networking between women both formally through teaching and informally through groups. Haddad's practical suggestions grounded in practice-based research provide a helpful resource for a response in chapter 6 to the current level of exclusion of women from theological education in the EECMY. The argument for changes in curriculum, however, although inclusive may be impractical at this stage, especially given Haddad's own advice about caution.

1.2.5 Ordination

Anti- ordination

Owanikin provides a whole range of examples of the cultural marginalization of women in relation to the debate about the ordination of women which she entitles 'anti-ordination'. These include general attitudes to women 'tinged' with cultural bias, ranging from the view that women are 'inferior' to men to the disappointment at the birth of a girl followed by less care for a baby girl (199, 209). What is important for my study here is that an African woman theologian recognises that these cultural issues which are many and which demonstrate a marginalisation of women, contribute to the silence of women and to arguments against their ordination.

She cites a further argument against women taking part in any leadership role in ministry, such as ordination as, 'women are divinely decreed to be subordinate to men, and thus there was no basis for their ruling over men in whatever capacity' (Owanikin 1995, 210). The reference to the divine decree is to the preferred choice of a particular scripture 1 Tim 2:11-15, over other more liberative texts. Owanikin shows how those who argue against the ordination of women select texts to support

their case and ignore other scriptures, a point that will be discussed further in chapters 5 and 6.

Other arguments quoted by Owanikin relate to the maleness of Christ and of the disciples, and of the command for wives to be subordinate to their husbands, which becomes a pattern for a public role (1992, 210). All of these arguments come from scripture set in its historical cultural context which accords entirely with the current cultural context in Ethiopia. Combined with the vulnerability and weakness of Eve, evidenced by a traditional patriarchal reading of the Fall, men make a strong case against the ordination of women, which will be examined in chapter 5 where the patriarchal reading will be discussed.

The final argument given by Owanikin against the ordination of women is that of women's ritual uncleanness, which again brings scripture into an alliance with African culture. She gives the examples of menstruation and pregnancy which because on occasion they render women unclean according to culture and scripture (lev), mean according to patriarchal attitudes that women cannot operate as ordained people (Owanikin, 1995, 2011). Loyda Fansie explains further the implications of the blood myth for Christian worship, 'a woman is usually excluded for her menstrual blood...she is therefore, unfit to touch holy vessels and dress in holy apparel-she cannot and must not 'look' holy. These are male privileges that must be enjoyed by men only' (Loyda Fansie ,1995, 139).

Pro-ordination

In support of the ordination of women Owanikin argues that Jesus demonstrated in his ministry that he saw men and woman as equals. She notes the place that he gave to women such as Mary his mother, Mary Magdelene in her meeting with the risen Christ, and Martha. She notes also the place of women such as Priscilla and Phoebe in the early church (1995, 2011).

Owanikin also gives considerable weight to women hearing the call of God to be ordained. She argues that if men then exclude them, they are limiting God and

replacing God's call with their own. She contends that the 'male ego centrally lies at the root of the subordination of women' (199, 212).

Owanikin works her way through the biblical material citing liberative texts such as Gal. 3:28 (1995, 216) and the role of women in leadership in the churches (Rom 16:11f) in support of the ordination of women (1992, 215). She also responds to traditionally oppressive texts such as Gen. 2:18, arguing that 'helper' is not a title of subordination, since God too is named as helper. She neutralises the use of 1 Cor 14: by arguing that its thrust is for orderliness rather than the permanent silence of women (1992, 216). I find Owanikin's arguments directly relevant to my work, both to the silencing of women by excluding them from ordination and also to responding to these oppressive structures with alternative readings of scripture and liberative texts. I will engage with these issues in chapter 6.

Ackermann takes a different approach from Owanikin in her treatment of women's ordination arguing that attitudes depend on how a person defines and does theology including their ecclesiology, anthropology and view of redemption. With reference to ecclesiology she argues that 'when women are liberated from stereotyping sexism, their attitudes towards women's ministry changes' (2003, 38). She argues that rather than seeing hierarchy in a divine order of God, man, woman and animals, based on a principle of authority over others, a form of domination in the interests of order, women are released to recognise diversity (2003, 41).

After analysing ecclesiology Ackermann considers anthropology and redemption in relation to women's ministry. She finds a broken and alienated humanity everywhere, and also in the church, in women's ministry where women seek recognition of their ministries and of themselves as equals, equally capable, equally respected. What such women find is rejection and alienation (2003, 39). Such rejection, she argues can lead women to conscientization and to a growth in self-awareness to recognise their alienation and oppression. She argues that they then search for liberation in new forms of dialogue, partnerships and community building to change the dehumanizing hierarchical structures (2003, 39). She argues further that such women can come to a greater recognition of the implications of their creation in the image of God for their gifting according to New Testament teaching

(2003, 41). Ackermann argues that a powerful argument for women in ministry is their gifts, one of which is leadership, distributed to women as to men in the diversity of gifts. The ministry of women allows them to develop their gifts for the benefit of the church without prescribing what their gifts might be (2003, 40). Ackermann's recognition of the equality of women with men and her insight in seeing how women's awareness can be raised through conscientization, partnership and the recognition of gifting will be helpful to me in working out practical strategies for change for women in ministry in the EECMY. I will return to this in chapter 6.

1.2.6 Community

Kanyoro gives a particular role to ordained women in the churches. They are to tell the stories of faith of women in their sermons; they are to challenge the traditional biblical texts and help women to gain confidence (2001, 160). However, Kanyoro also emphasises the importance of women working together, of communal theology, exemplified in the Circle because challenging the traditional theology is so hard (2001, 169). The role of ordained women given here presents a challenge to my work. Kanyoro shows how much courage and support women in ministry in Ethiopia will need. It will be important in the future for women in ministry in the EECMY who seek justice and liberation for Ethiopian women to be more involved in the Circle as a safe place from which women can speak because of the solidarity which it offers (Kanyoro, 2001, 169).

1. 2. 7 Christian ministry as partnership between men and women

Oduyoye has a vision of Christian ministry as a 'partnership of both men and women' which she defines as power sharing among men and women (1990, 53; c.f.2001, 86). Oduyoye writes, 'Power-sharing is a prerequisite for the realization of co-responsibility. Created equally human, God made women and men stewards of creation and gave us authority to jointly fill the earth and manage it' (1990, 53). She considers the theological possibility of equality between men and women by referring to the creation story where men and women are created in the image of God equally (Gen. 1: 26-7). Oduyoye's motivation for presenting the notion of Christian ministry as 'partnership between men and women' is her own conviction that all have been called by God for service with their given gifts (2004, 70). Edith Semmambo of Uganda is making a similar point from a different starting point when

she says that all the members of the church have been given gifts for the building up of the community (c.f.1 Corinthians 12). The recognition that this is impossible without power sharing is helpful in encouraging me to identify areas where women lack power and therefore to identify what barriers must be removed before there can be genuine partnership.

In relation to partnership, Ramodibe asks, 'Is working together possible when there is no equality between women and men (1990, 32). We have seen the situation of Kanyoro, how she was barred from leadership and ordination by her own church simply on the basis of gender. Therefore, Oduyoye's notion of Christian ministry as partnership between women and men may be difficult to achieve.

According to her view, through the act and sacrament of baptism all persons are recognized and accepted as part of the body of Christ, irrespective of gender, culture and race. Oduyoye's aim is to liberate women from male dominance and the patriarchal system in both church and society. Justice and inclusiveness need to be the main principles of Christian ministries in church and society (Oduyoye, 2001, 86). Oduyoye's notion of Christian ministry seems inclusive but African women theologians such as Phiri question what kind of partnership can be obtained in an African country where patriarchy is all pervasive. If partnership is power sharing, can we see practical power sharing in African society including church? Would this be possible or would this in the end amount to a kind of gender complementarity which is a division of labour according to traditional patriarchal roles? This is a critical point which will be addressed in chapters 5 and 6. How partnership might operate in practice will be also addressed in chapter 6.

Oduyoye's vision of Christian ministry as partnership may be helpful for the future but is not practicable at present. I do not think that I can use it because asking for power sharing in Ethiopia would not be easy. The men have held it for such a long time and do not want to lose it. I see here in Oduyoye's writing a strong dependence on theological thinking about the shared identity of men and women both in creation and in their recreation as members of the body of Christ. Working from theological foundations is key for my work as an ordained Christian woman and theologies of creation and recreation with their focus on shared identities fit well with the

importance of my understanding of partnership in ministry. These, then are helpful themes on which to reflect in my work.

1.2. 8. *Koinonia*/fellowship

Oduyoye uses a second word *koinonia* alongside partnership to enhance the idea of mutuality and reciprocity. She explains that the Greek term *koinonia* refers to a community of sharing and participation, or common possession of something (Oduyoye, 2001, 85). *Koinonia* conveys the sense of working together, utilizing the best one can provide, and not according to the restrictions of tradition and culture. It is therefore for her an important word to use alongside partnership.

1.2.9. Solidarity

Oduyoye further illuminates the partnership of men and women by using the concept of solidarity. She says, ‘Solidarity is walking hand in hand, and developing strength through unity so that common interests are protected and common aims are achieved’ (Oduyoye, 1990, 43, Kanyoro, 2002, 18). She also adds to the solidarity of women working together a call for women to work with men. Oduyoye is insistent that the church is made up of both men and women and should therefore not be viewed exclusively as a men’s club. In this solidarity, there is a need for the church to recognize the gifts of women. Men need to learn to rely on women in bringing about communion within the body of Christ (Oduyoye 1990, 49). According to Oduyoye, solidarity involves both men and women being united and committed to walk and work together. There is also a sense of sharing together to ensure the realization of genuine mutuality.

However, there is currently a problem that solidarity of men with women will in effect be solidarity of men because women will be sidelined and ignored. Therefore what is needed initially is to build solidarity amongst women only, in order to find a strong voice that can be extended to solidarity of women with men. Further as part of this process, it is important for women to seek out and work collaboratively with men who are sympathetic to the issues in women’s experience of ministry (Phiri, 2009, 11). I will engage further with the solidarity of women as a strategy to respond to their marginalization in chapter 6.

1.2. 10 Ministry as service/*diakonia*

This concept of ministry as service holds considerable ambiguity for women. According to the New Testament, ministry is associated with service, modelled supremely in the life of Christ. On the other hand women in the EECMY alongside other Ethiopian and African women find themselves forced into servitude while the command to serve is not followed by Christian men. For example, Jesus said 'I am among you as one who serves (Lk., 22: 27, Matt. 20: 28, Mk. 10:45). In his service he demonstrated the spirit of service as undertaking menial tasks when he washed his disciples' feet (John, 13: 4ff). Ministry then indicates the function of providing service for others rather than being served and is based on calling rather than expectation.

African women theologians recognise in their work the fundamental Christian command to serve but they demonstrate awareness of the way in which this commandment is distorted by patriarchy. There are many examples of their endorsement of the gospel principle of service. For example, Ndayisaba argues that when, women serve in order to follow the example of Christ, they provide different services such as hospitality in the home and in the church (1996, 45). Further, Anne Nasimyu indicates the desire of some women to experience sacrificial service, when she says, 'women feel worthy when they can sacrifice themselves for others' (1989, 131; Rakoczy, 2004, 63; Teresa M. Hinga, 1994, 265; Oduyoye, 1994, 7; 2001, 108). However, Oduyoye recognises that although giving service is a biblical Christian behaviour, there are dangers for women in a patriarchal context:

Offering and receiving hospitality is a key indication of the African emphasis on sustaining our life-force at all costs, both as individuals and as communities...Hospitality is built on reciprocity, openness and acceptance, but to open one's self to the other is always a risk (Oduyoye, 2001, 93).

She indicates that, although service needs to be built on reciprocity, women take all the burdens to care for others. It is a risk for women because their service is not always recognized by the church and family. Oduyoye, observes further in recognising and giving voice to the abuse of women's service. She points out that the model of ministry as service exploits women because it makes the male pastors like masters for they are always credited for the service that has been performed by

women (2001,93). The point is that women should not be taking the entire burden even if they are recognized for taking the burden.

Hinga, from Kenya, explains this danger further by arguing that women are coerced to sacrifice everything, even their gifts, in order to maintain male power. She warns against the scapegoat-type sacrifice of women which she labels ‘wrongful’ (Hinga 1992, 184-85, c.f. 1995, 184-85) and which is yet another manifestation of patriarchy. The key point here also recognised by Souga (a woman participant a workshop) and other African women theologians is that ministry is about self-emptying and about giving oneself. Yet, ‘What African women reject is the combination of cross and sacrifice laid on them by people who have no intention of walking those paths themselves’ (Oduyoye, 2002, 163). The argument is that the call to take up the cross and deny oneself is directed to *all* who would be called Christians and it is not sensitive to gender, race or class.

The vision of African women theologians expressed in the literature considered is then of ministry as service within the framework of a partnership between men and women. Such a partnership can be identified with mutuality and reciprocity within the household of God. However, the literature also raises the problem of the distortion and abuse of service through patriarchy. How this problem is to be overcome will be addressed in detail in chapter 6.

1.3. Women and ministry in white western feminist perspectives

1.3.1. Introduction

This final section of the literature review will survey the literature from within the western feminist theological community on women’s ministry. Although not directly linked with an African context, it is important to draw on some of the contributions of western feminists because the EECMY adopted its theology from western missionaries.

The influence of western theology on the EECMY means that many of the issues raised in my fieldwork resonate with issues debated in specifically *western* feminist literature – for example, issues to do with equality, the maleness of God and

ordination. Of course, in some instances, there are common views between African women theologians and white western feminist theologians. However, given that the literature of white western feminist theologians is vast, it is only appropriate to survey those contributions which help to address the marginalization of women in ministry in Ethiopia and are pertinent to their experience.

In narrowing down the area of investigation, I have selected work only from those feminist theologians who have remained within the Christian church as their views support transformation within rather than beyond Christianity and fit into my context within the national evangelical Lutheran church EECMY. Storkey makes the same point in saying, 'Christian feminists have stayed within the Church...Feminist theologians such as Ruether have seen their task as one which speaks to the whole Church whilst specifically encouraging women' (Storkey, 1995, 126). They include scholars such as Ruether, Fiorenza, Slee and others. A key aim of such Christian feminists is to transform patriarchal systematic oppression within the church and society which I will discuss in chapter 6. I suggest that their views will contribute to my project as my project looks for transformation.

I deliberately decided not to include the work of western post-Christian feminists because these theologians, for example, Mary Daly and Daphne Hampson have argued that Christianity is so hopelessly patriarchal that it is impossible to transform it. I myself do not believe this and have not found their work to be appropriate for my task. I also did not include the views of womanist theologians except brief reference to the work of Delores Williams (2006) since their focus tends to include perspectives from racism and classism as well as gender, and thus introduces a further complexity when making any comparison with my context. Whilst it is too naïve to suggest that women's silence in the EECMY is purely the result of sexism alone, this work does not set out to examine the intersectionality of sexism with other features of oppression, such as class. This task would be too extensive and is not one I am concerned with here. It is also important to note that womanist theology is an emergent voice of African *American* Christian women in the United States and so does not speak directly to the experiences of black women from an Ethiopian/African context.

Key themes in the work of western feminist theologians have included some of the great doctrinal themes in feminist perspective, such as: salvation, Christology, Trinity, sin and pneumatology (Slee, 2003). Other important themes in feminist perspective have been the Bible, ecclesiology, language about God and more specifically ministry and ordination (Slee, 2003). If however, these themes are set within an Ethiopian context, then the key questions on the Ethiopian agenda relate to ecclesiology, and the use of the Bible in relation to ministry, to sin and to salvation. My choice of material for the literature review is therefore determined by the marginalized situation of women in ministry in the EECMY

I thus used the western feminist theologians those who are relevant to my project. In many ways, the theological views raised in relation to the role and status of women in the EECMY reflect this western influence and so are fittingly met by some engagement with western feminist critiques.

As silence is a central theme in my thesis I will consider Slee's work on prayer as a way of finding a voice to speak out from silence (2004, 58). I will follow this by focussing on the contribution of feminist theological anthropology to understandings of gender and the ways in which attitudes to gender influence models of ministry. I illustrate this with reference to the work of Gonzalez and Ruether, but also then moving on to examine different models of ministry with their varied emphases on complementary, diversity, equality, representing Christ and service. My reason for approaching the subject in this way is that western feminist theologians have moved on from arguments for and against the ordination of women to ask what does it *mean* to live and work as a priest, and do women bring a *different* understanding and expression of ordained ministry? I follow these questions with another about how might the church look when those in it have been strongly influenced by feminist theology. Finally, I examine one seminal expression of Biblical hermeneutics from Fiorenza, chosen because it continues to have significant influence internationally on understandings of the equality of women in ministry, and two more recent examples by Upton to illustrate the variety of work in Biblical hermeneutics which is continuing and that in its focus and method may be useful in addressing women's

marginalization in ordained and lay leadership and in strategic management and decision-making in ministry in the EECMY.

1.3.2 Silence

Given that silence is the overarching theme of my thesis, it is important to engage western feminist discussion of this with particular reference to ministry. Also, given my particular concern to address the silence of women in four key areas of ministry (namely, decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination) it will be important to draw on sources which will help me consider these specific areas of silence.

Rachel Muers considers the multiplicity of silence in her article, 'The Mute Cannot Keep Silent' (2000). She notes that 'responding to a question with silence can indicate agreement, ignorance, deep thought, and refusal to acknowledge the questioner' (2000, 109). The silence I shall examine in this section will include some aspects of her explanation, but will focus on a lack of voice because of being silenced and the impact of this on learning again to find a voice.

Many feminist theologians understand silence as *voicelessness*. For example, Fiorenza argues that, 'women are not only the 'silent majority' but also the 'silenced majority in the Roman Catholic Church' (1985, 3). As a Roman Catholic, she notes that although women are the majority in the church, they may not only choose to remain silent (i.e. not speak) but are also silenced and denied a voice in church, their own church. Silence thus, here, is presented as a symbolic position that women not only choose but are also forced to occupy. Ruether echoes this perspective noting how the Church embraces and indeed enforces the silence of women through the application of particular readings of the Christian tradition. For her 'the patriarchal culture reverberates with the constant demand that women keep silent' (Ruether, 1988, 58) and this is reinforced by the way the church accepts a cultural and biblical tradition which tells women to keep silent (1Cor. 14:34-35) (1985, 3). For her, women's silence is all pervasive because patriarchal and hierarchal church structures systematically force women to be silent simply by referring to the above text without providing a necessary interpretation. Ruether's work thus provides some valuable

insights for my own project, specifically to my analysis of the public ministries of lay leadership and ordination, later in this thesis. Her reference to 'church structures' suggests that she is aware of the ways in which women may be silenced at strategic levels of hierarchical ministry and this will be an important consideration for my discussion in chapters 3 to 5.

In contrast Slee in her book *Praying Like a Woman*' (2004) indicates responses to voicelessness by suggesting ways in which women might be awakened to come out from silence. She argues that, 'For women, there is often a struggle to come to speech and voice' (2004, 58). She indicates three ways in which they should speak instead of accepting silence for life: 1) to struggle, 2) to have confidence and, 3) to speak and, to speak with conviction, for her ideas need to be spoken (2004, 58). She argues that, although the silence of women may be deep rooted because of their experiences, they need to have self-esteem to speak out their concerns and to speak against injustice in church and society with full confidence.

Slee has been particularly concerned to draw attention the silencing strategies of women's education and girls' schooling. In her article, 'Women's Silence in Religious Education' (1989), she discusses the need for religious educators to open up spaces and places for females to speak and for their voices to be recognised and valued: religious educators' she says, 'must find ways to shatter the silence about women and to create a space and a climate in which women's voice can be heard' (1989, 29). Schools, she argues, should become contexts in which females can gain experience of speaking and dare to share their views. Nevertheless, Slee recognizes that she has not seen such positive views in schools and contends that 'if women's silence reigns anywhere, it is here, in the classroom' (1989, 31). Indeed, for her, the classroom itself mitigates against women's active participation in learning and their development as thinking persons. Such silence is a form of alienation and an experience of challenge to a notions of development and the inability to grow and move forward (Slee, 2004, 82; c.f.1989, 31). Because female voices are not 'heard' and therefore valued in the classroom, because they are not welcomed or embraced, often ignored or dismissed, silence comes to symbolically signify their isolation and exclusion as well as the denial of women's value as persons. In this sense, Slee suggests that silence 'speaks loader than words' (1989, 29); it powerfully prevents

women from seeing themselves as subjects and symbolically communicates that women and their contributions are not valuable.

The notion of alienation is important here. Slee sees women/girls as being 'alienated' because the teachers themselves *discourage* women's contribution in school. Thus, she argues that, 'female silence in the classroom is often further reinforced by teachers who reward docile, diligent, unquestioning behaviour because it makes classroom control so much easier' (1989, 31). Limitation of women's/girls' participation in school is not only in relation to speaking but also in relation to having confidence to have, to pursue and to realise their ambitions. Because of their silence in schools females are not identified with nor are encouraged to occupy roles of decision-making., a point reinforced by Belenky *et al* who identify that '...men are the leaders, the decision-makers, the ones with authority...' (Belenky et al, 1989, 31). In this sense, females learn practices of silence in the classroom which then become habitually repeated in other spheres of life. Slee notes that females often do not communicate with others in the school community and so inhabit an environment of loneliness and alienation which limits their growth and the sharing of their experiences with others. She thus contends that alienation affects women's growth and limits their social and psychological development in school and within the wider society. She says,

by remaining silent, females deprive themselves of the chance to actively engage with the material and thus jeopardize their own learning; at the same, remaining silent reinforces their negative self-image reduces their level of aspiration and is likely to lead to even withdrawal, so that it becomes more and more difficult to break the pattern of male dominance and female subordination operative in the classroom (1989, 31).

The point being made is that women come to *internalize* the patriarchal rule that announces women do not talk and this consequently serves to normalize women's silence. By talking in public or in the classroom males are able to develop self-confidence and easily become public speakers, but because women are always restricted from talking and because their voices are not heard or valued, they both learn and reproduce an environment of silence. This internalization could be one reason why women's self-confidence is limited and attention will be given to this in later chapters when I address how and why women are silent and silenced in the EECMY more specifically. It is certainly true that women in Ethiopia internalize cultural demands which prohibit women from speaking openly with other men. As

will become apparent from my later discussion, this culture of silence is reflected in the provision of theological education within the EECMY which is often denied to women. Not only are women frequently denied opportunities to study, but where they *do* gain access to this kind of study, they experience the silencing of *male* teachers who often do not encourage women to share their ideas. As such, they come to internalize the expectations of silence and devalue their own voices.

Speaking more generally about women's silence within the Church, Fiorenza (1985, 4) argues that women should obtain freedom to be represented and participate in the life of the Church but notes that their invisibility has continued. Thus, in her article 'Women Invisible in Church and Theology', she concludes that women are the silenced group in the Roman Catholic Church (1985, 3). She underlines that as women are the silenced group it is difficult for them to move forward in order to develop their gifts in public. In her argument, Fiorenza recognizes that women have been silenced throughout the centuries and continue to be so today. One reason for this, she argues, is because Paul teaches women's silence in church worship (teaching and preaching), (1985, 3, 1Cor. 14: 34-45). She draws attention to the ways in which the biblical tradition has legitimised and further prescribed the silencing of women. This becomes particularly important within my own evangelical context where the status and authority of the Bible are paramount and where Paul's teachings have been used as a tool against women's ministry. As such, Fiorenza's work will be a helpful tool to my analysis of this in chapters 5 and 6.

Further insight on the metaphor of 'silence' is gained from the book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*, co-authored by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule. Their empirical project began in the late 1970s and was designed to investigate the life of women in schools. The interview was conducted with ordinary women living ordinary lives. The informants were American women of different ages, class and ethnic backgrounds who lived in both rural and urban contexts (Belenky, et al, 1986, 4). The authors 'became concerned about why women students speak so frequently of problems and gaps in their learning and so often doubt their intellectual competence' (Belenky, et al, 1986, 4). Here, the authors noted that women's voices appeared to be dominated by the hierarchical structures in schools and family where women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless, and also as subject to the

whims of authority. As such, they suggest that the idea of finding a voice is symbolic of the journey that women need to make in order to ‘put the knower back into the known’ and to ‘reclaim the power of their own minds and voices’. In other words, the journey to speech comes to be a journey, not simply into their own confidence as *knowers*, but into their own confidences as *selves* and *persons* who know. It symbolises women’s journey into subjectivity. Dialogue and collaboration between women in educational communities is – they suggest – key to developing this. However the authors note that this is a difficult task because the women involved in the study claimed that they ‘relied on what others told them about themselves to get any sense of self’ (Belenky *et al*, 1986, 19, 31). Selfhood was effectively something they *received* from others rather than owning and developing this for themselves and this tended to increase dependency among women. As such, Belenky *et al* state that women in their study were in effect forced to accept what they had been told because they were not in a position to argue or object. Consequently they suggest that words were used as weapons to belittle and violate women. They prevented women from speaking for themselves and from challenging the authority of what had been spoken.

The authors explain that the women in their study who experienced silence often grew up in a context where discussion with other family members was often actively discouraged (1986, 32). Consequently, in such circumstances, the silent women lived in a world with little conversation in the home and were thus deterred from finding their voice. They thus argue that as a result of this, these women came to believe they were not the sources of knowledge and that knowledge was lodged in others such as men (1986, 31).

Such observations carry significant resonance with my own findings as will become apparent later on when I discuss the influence of Ethiopian culture on women’s role and status within the EECMY. In Ethiopian society, women are deliberately taught not to speak in the presence of men (in church and society) and so come to internalize men as the knowers and view themselves as not knowledgeable. I will discuss this more widely in chapter five where I address cultural barriers to women’s ministry.

Gilligan has also provided a valuable discussion of the notion of ‘silence’ in relation to women. In her seminal text, *In a Different Voice*, she argues that women’s exclusion from direct participation in the social world simply reinforces the power of male speech and its control over women, making women subject to and dependent upon men. She notes that,

when women feel excluded from direct participation in society, they see themselves as subject to a consensus or judgement made and enforced by the men on whose protection and support they depend and by whose names they are known (1982, 67).

As women are the silenced group they always feel dependent on men (father, husband and the male leaders). Gilligan interviewed a woman who told her that

as a woman, I feel I never understood that I was a person, that I could make decisions and I had a right to make decisions. I always felt that I belonged to my father or my husband in some way, or church, which was always represented by a male clergyman. They were the three men in my life: father, husband, and clergyman, and they had much more to say about what I should or shouldn’t do. They were really authority figures which I accepted (Gilligan, 1982, 67).

She thus concludes that in many cases, women believe that they are not able to make decisions, assuming that they know nothing and men know everything. The above interviewee however notes how growing up in a man’s world where decision-making is only men’s role made her accept and not question the authority of her father, husband and the church clergymen. According to her explanation, every decision made by these three figures was considered right and perfect.

This is certainly the case within the EECMY as will become evident throughout the course of this thesis. Women in the EECMY internalize their own subordination and men’s headship which is cultural and theological. Again, similarities here with Ethiopian society and the EECMY, in particular are pertinent and these will be addressed in full later in chapters 3 to 5.

In response to this problem of female ‘silence’, feminist theologians and women authors seek to give women a voice. Esseveld comments on how women have been made invisible in the society for many years and she attempts ‘to make women’s silences audible by presenting their reflections and actions in their daily lives, against the background of a particular society and historical period’ (1988, 8; see also Slee, 1989, 29). Such positive action and struggle to make women visible in the society was supported by younger women at university in the 1970’s who were part of the women’s movement. She notes that it was the women’s movement which forced

social change, particularly for making invisible women visible and able to speak in public (1988, 9; c.f. Olsen, 1978, 23).

A number of feminists have noted the significance of the metaphor of ‘silence’ in second wave feminism (e.g. Slee 2004, Belenky, 1986, Shanon Craigon Snell and Beth R. Crisp 2010). Of especial note here, however, is the work of Morton, accessed through an article by Keller (1988, 51-680). Influential as an early civil rights organizer and later feminist leader, she uses the metaphor of ‘hearing to speech’ in order to simulate the notion that women are empowered in contexts where other women hear one another. ‘Hearing’ in this setting however precedes speech. It constitutes an embodied act – a sharing *between* women in advance of words where women’s openness to listen actually provides space for speech. She tells the story of one woman who shares her own painful experiences with other women and how this led her to perceive of ‘hearing’ in a new way – as a revolutionary tool which was counter to patriarchal silencing. The woman noted: ‘I have a strange feeling you have heard me before I started. You have heard me to [*sic*] my own story’ (1976, 127). Morton learned from the story of the woman by listening to her tell her story in the awareness- raising group. Keller insists that ‘Morton does not just listen: she both hears to speech and so speaks from her hearing’ (1988, 53). This suggests that some hearing is transformative because we ‘hear’ what we have not heard before by listening. Drawing on the above stories, Morton argues that women learn from listening and hearing to each other in the group. By reflecting on what they have heard women learn how to speak. This is also supported by Paola Di Cori who cites Irigary saying that ‘women had to speak differently and invent a new language; but above all they had to speak to each other with the awareness of women’s sexual specificity and without the interference of men’ (Paola Di Cori, 2006, 34). The above evidence shows that women may learn more within their own women’s groups rather than in mixed groups which include men. I will develop these examples in chapter 6 where women’s only groups is presented as one of my strategies for developing women’s capacity to speak and reflect in meetings.

Despite the fact that women’s silence is everywhere in human society, such positive views from Esseveld and other feminist theologians will provide helpful information as I consider the transformation of women’s silence in the EECMY in chapter six.

1. 3. 3 Feminist Theological Anthropology and Models of Ministry

Gonzalez introduces the subject of feminist theological anthropology by outlining a number of different approaches in the discipline that are most used in feminist theology. I have selected three of these approaches which seem to me to be give rise to models for ministry. They are: 1) dual nature, which suggests that male and female are equal but different. However their difference is pre-determined according to gender role, which leads directly to complementarity. 2) single-nature, which identifies biology as ‘accident’, but not as, in any way, determining personhood, nor any pre-determined roles (Hinsdale in Gonzalez, 2007, 110 f.). 3) multi-polar, which refuses to limit humanity to sexuality and instead regards diversity as normative (Johnson in Gonzalez, 2007, 111). With reference to multi-polar, Johnson helpfully identifies six elements that are fundamental to human identity: embodiment, personal relationships, structural relationships, time and special context, culture, and orientation towards the future. I think that these elements provide a fruitful tool for analysing the implications of any one of the approaches and would provide a useful checklist for analysis.

Moving, then, from theory to practice I need to ask the question what might women’s ministry look like and will it be different from that of men? I discuss a number of models below.

Complementarity

In her book entitled *The Church Women Want*, Johnson comments on an egalitarian anthropology of partnership and on a different approach namely complementarity (2002, 33). She explains that the problem with complementarity is that it legitimizes the ordering of the vocation of women to pre-given subordinate roles based on gender rather than their capability.

Complementarity assumes the male as normative and as the measuring rod against which women and their contributions are measured (Carr, 1996, 57). Such a view suggests that a woman’s contribution is only meaningful when joined to the male’s. Interestingly within the history of theology, men have not suffered the effects of this scenario being read in the opposite direction. If men and women complement each other (in ministry) women are usually relegated to being responsible for the caring,

pastoral duties, and men for teaching, instructing, leading and decision-making duties (see, Johnson, 2002, 42). For those who favour this model, such a division of labour is better because men and women complement each other. They believe that neither is valued *over* the other; however, it tends to be the men who have the weightier and more valued roles. In this view, complementarity serves conveniently to privilege the male over the female under the pretence of balance (Johnson, 2002, 36).

As Butler observes, feminist theologians such as Ruether and Johnson reject the idea of complementarity because particularly for Johnson it represents ‘an unrelieved binary way of thinking ‘which’ casts men and women as polar opposites, each bearing unique characteristics from which the other is excluded’ (2002, 36). Furthermore, the view of complementarity is not one of value-neutrality and mutuality, since a dominant partner is still speaking on behalf of a silenced and objectified group (1991, 14-15). Further, since both men and women are created in the image of God they are equal. Johnson observes that in the light of this many women ‘feel compelled to reject the theory of complementarity’ (2002, 36). These same concerns have been raised from within the feminist theologians’ community in relation to *essentialism* because the implication has been that women are better at certain activities because they are women, and men are better at others because they are men. They are concerned that *essentialism* serves to legitimise a form of complementarity which confirms rather than challenges male dominance.

Ruether also argues that ‘more highly valued cultural activities are monopolized by men’ (1983, 75). This means women are not allowed to participate in decisions about valued cultural activities such as rituals. Men are the law makers but women are not, although they may be the receivers of the decisions that have been made by men (1983, 74).

Ruether also argues that complementarity has been used to exclude women from leadership in ministry. She argues that, ‘the patriarchal theology that has prevailed throughout most of Christian history in most traditions has rigidly barred women from ministry’ (1983, 194). Women hold the lower positions because they are barred from the higher ministry in Church and society (see, 1983, 75). Thus, Ruether contends that, ‘the argument for this exclusion is identical with arguments of

patriarchal anthropology. Women are denied leadership in the churches for the same reason they are denied leadership in society' (1983, 194). Thus complementarity which is part of the patriarchal mindset plays a significant role in women's exclusion from exercising managerial leadership in ministry.

In contrast, Ruether comments that, women 'share equally in the image of God and they have joint responsibility of humans for rule over creation' (1990, 146). Ruether's two contrasting statements provide tools for analysing the behaviour of men that is oppressive and behaviour that is liberative in relation to women's roles in decision-making and strategic planning. These tools will be useful for analysing the data from the fieldwork in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Diversity in Ministry

We may again ask whether women bring anything 'unique' or 'specific' to ministry in distinction from what men bring (Ward, 2009, 79) or whether they are the 'same'? Since my argument is on women's leadership, I may ask that 'do women lead differently? Ward claims that women may lead in ordained ministry in a different way from men (2009, 84). According to Ward, collaboration is more important than ministry viewed as one male's role; ministry is sharing and togetherness in order to build the church together. Martin makes the same point in her chapter, 'A different way of working: what women bring to collaborative ministry' (1996, 76-96). Traditionally, leadership is male whose power is 'over' but the example of Jesus leadership is power 'to' as he came to serve rather than be served (Ward, 2009, 83). Baisley also argues that women will bring to ordained ministry a different set of relational skills, adept at gathering women and men together informally and naturally, without hierarchy, to discuss problems, plan their initiatives together a view shared by Martin (Baisley 1996, 110; Martin, 1996, 76f.,) Many feminist theologians suggest that women bring a new perspective and new gifts through their leadership. Ward cites Fisher, saying, 'women's gifts of cooperation, patience, intuition and web-thinking are ideal for twenty-first-century leadership, and that working collaboratively with men, women will change the world' (2009, 79; Russell, 1995, 67). The key theme here is about non-hierarchical collaborative leadership focusing on doing things together with others.

Storkey also suggests similar view by saying that, ‘many women see their calling as sharing ministry with others in the church. This is further away from the hierarchal concept of the church’ (1995, 54). According to Storkey, ministry is characterized by sharing in accordance with the gifts of the individuals. Russell, similarly in her book *Church in the Round* explains leadership using a metaphor of a round table where every baptised Christian is able to share (1993, 36). For Russell, both lay and ordained leadership are included within a community who work together. This community of church, where there is no hierarchy, is similar to that described by Storkey. This picture of ‘round table’, inclusive, shared leadership where there is no hierarchy will provide a helpful resource when I consider (in chapter 6) how women in ministry in the EECMY might work together in the future.

Equality in Ministry

The theme ‘discipleship of equals’ understands ministry as a reciprocal arrangement between equals and subverts more patriarchal models of ministry. It claims to offer a more ‘biblical’ model of ministry which reflects Jesus’ ministry and the structures of the early church.

In her book *Discipleship of Equals: A critical ecclesiology of liberation*, Fiorenza explains the meaning of the notions of “equality” and “discipleship”. Fiorenza states that these two concepts are often misunderstood when it is assumed that women should become like men in their call to Christian discipleship (1993, 10). Instead, she seeks to highlight equality within the diversity which reflects the central background to discipleship. Equality as discipleship of equals means sharing of ministry equally. In other words, men can share women’s role which is domestic and women can share what was previously men’s public spheres. For Fiorenza, the discipleship of equals is based on the commission of Jesus that all disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit ought to share the good news of the gospel to an alternative world liberated equally from hunger, poverty, sexism, racism, discrimination and domination (1979, see Frances Young, 2008, 29).

Representing Christ in Ministry

A number of questions have been asked about whether women can represent Christ in ordained ministry (c.f. Graham, 1996, 38). Other questions cluster around this one such as whether Jesus' choosing of the 12 male disciples supports women's exclusion from ordained ministry (c.f. Carr, 1996, 55) and whether the conceptualization of the female body as 'unclean' supports women's exclusion from ordained ministry. These can and provide key *reasons* for women's exclusion from ordained ministry and given that there is an overlap between the arguments presented against women's ordination in the west and those arguments presented by opponents to women's ordination in my fieldwork, some critical engagement with feminist voices will be useful. However, when the questions are asked of those who have been ordained, they pose a slightly different question about how it can be possible and in this way offer both a challenge and an opportunity. For Green they provide a further model of ministry. Green argues that representing Christ at the eucharist is not to be understood literally (biologically) but rather symbolically as a ministry acting as a member of the body of Christ. She argues that her role in representing Christ demonstrates both the grace of God and the inclusive nature of the Kingdom (2009, 47). She argues further that women who are themselves created in the image of God can image the Divine. In arguing this she is concerned that no attempt is made to stereotype the sexual difference of women (Green, 2002, 48). The most challenging suggestion is that if the image of God in the women priest is recognized by participants, then greater value will be given to women's bodylines and functions; they will not be considered a source of uncleanness but rather a source of life (Green, 2002, 49).

Baisley adds that women bring a deeply significant difference in relation to the eucharist. She argues that when, presiding at the eucharist, it is significantly different that women priests act as 'channels of God's grace and power'. They bring, she argues, through this action a sense of completeness and wholeness, not only to themselves, but also to women in the congregation (and perhaps also to men), as the once excluded, although created in the image of God, and recreated in Christ now represents Him at His table (1996, 107). It will be interesting and important to consider in the future what will be the impact of women presiding at the holy table in the EECMY.

The problem with understanding ministry as service

Having already considered the literature by African women theologians on ministry as service, in this section I review western feminist literature on the same subject and find the same problem: it is always women who minister to the men in church, home and in the society at large. The men do not share the traditional roles with women but always take the leadership position and think that they deserve to be served which is not the model of Jesus' ministry (Borrowdale, 1989, 24). Russell recognises the issue:

Even ministry as service is a special problem for women because they are almost always expected to become servants: to accept a role that has long been assigned to them in church and society. Too long the word 'service' has been debased so that we think of servanthood as a means of becoming a 'doormat'. We identify it with involuntary subordination of servitude to husband, children, boss, clergy' (1979, 76).

The tradition of keeping women as servants at all places and times has a long history that has come from patriarchal views. Western writers also recognise that women themselves collude in this expectation by internalising the role of servant (Borrowdale, 1989, 25). Although women habitually serve, it is not really based on their choice but rather on the gender role expectation of the community. In contrast, Ruether argues not for an end to *diakonia* but to an end both to hierarchies and to women being limited to this one role of service. She writes,

The principles of Christian community are found upon a role transformation between men and women, rulers and ruled. The ministry of the church is not to be modelled on hierarchies of lordship, but on the *diakonia* of women and servants, while women are freed from exclusive identification with the service role and called to join the circle of disciples as equal members (Ruether, 1975, 66).

The central message of her argument is ministry as service should not be centred on an assigned role but on the gifts of individuals. Moreover, Russell summarizes that, 'such service in the New Age is possible, for all persons find their primary identity not in their assigned sex, race, or class, but in Christ who sets them free for service' (1979, 71).

Although ministry is service, Fiorenza asserts that 'A theological definition of ministry defines 'ministry as contributory service...Ministry has to empower rather than to exploit women' (1993, 191-92). The literature from feminist voices suggests that "service" must be deconstructed outside a sexist context so that service means

something different from simply legitimising the subjugation of women. The literature from African women theologians illustrated the problem of the distortion and abuse of service through patriarchy. This feminist literature will help me to respond further to women's marginalization in the EECMY in a way which does not legitimise service along these sexist lines.

1. 3. 4. Women-church

The literature has been concerned to respond to the question of what should a feminist informed church look like. In other words, if we are to take the full humanity of women seriously and ensure this is reflected in church contexts, what might this mean in real terms for the Christian community and for those who minister within it? The response from feminist thinkers on women church may prove useful.

Women-church is a global ecumenical movement of feminist base community (Hunt, 1996, 240). "Women-church groups", she suggests, 'should claim collectively to be church and therefore liberated from patriarchy' (Ruether, 1983, 58). She developed the vision of women-church in response to the patriarchy of the church. In her view, "patriarchy has traditionally split woman from woman, and women of the ruling classes from poor women". Additionally, she says, 'the patriarchal culture reverberates with the constant demand that women keep silent' (Ruether, 1988, 58). She argues that women-church collectively is a genuine church and in the tradition of the biblical exodus community is a new community of liberation from patriarchy (Ruether, 2001, 57). In this community of exodus, the different experiences and common interests of women are embraced. They may include the experiences of white, black, rich, poor, educated and none educated women, (Isasi-Diaz, 2001, 89).

Women's solidarity is exemplified by women sharing information with each other based on commitment to each other. Ruether argues that 'Women have to withdraw from male-dominated spaces so they can gather together and define 'their own' experiences' (1988, 59, see, Watson, 2003, 45). According to Ruether, when these groups of individuals come together or share ideas wherever they are, they may form a women-church which can be a group within a mainstream church. Isasi-Diaz from Latin America, explains solidarity as a sharing of "common responsibilities and

interests,’’ which necessarily arouse shared feelings and lead to joint action’ (2001, 89). The title women-church may be helpful for North America and other countries but may not fit with my church because such experience would be viewed as extreme, alienating and oppositional for my participants. Nevertheless, the seeds of female solidarity already exist in the EECMY and could be developed further as a significant source of empowerment for women to find a collective voice rather than women’s individual voices. I will engage with this discussion of women only groups at the end of the thesis in chapter 6.

1.3.5. Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics

Given that feminist Biblical hermeneutics are so fundamental to addressing patriarchy in women’s ministry in the EECMY because of its evangelical nature, it is important to engage with some of the literature on this subject. Upton argues that nearly all feminist Biblical hermeneutics begins from the premise that it involves a ‘critique of patriarchy’ (2002, 99). Such critique is necessary she argues, because every stage of interpretation is characterised by patriarchal power from translation to reading to preaching to praxis. As it stands biblical interpretation ‘represents one side of a conversation, taking little notice of the voices of the poor, the illiterate, the disenfranchised’ (Upton, 2002, 99) - which describes Ethiopian women very accurately. She argues that its goal is either the ascendancy of women – at its more radical end, or a movement towards equality, the reconciliation of men and women in a new humanity (Upton, 2002, 100). She also recognises that interpretations can be positive as well as negative.

Upton recognises three approaches to interpretation: a prophetic liberating tradition, typical of Ruether; a remnant-retrieving approach which seeks to identify and/or re-read neglected texts, typical of Tribble and also an approach using texts which may be outside the canon of Scripture. The latter would not be relevant to my work in my context. Upton also recognises the importance to the discipline of Fiorenza’s hermeneutics of suspicion, recognising that if men have written the text, collected it, transmitted it and received it, then it will contain a bias that readers should consider as they read.

In terms of methods, Upton recognises the traditional textual critical method used by, for example Tribble and Fiorenza, and also more recently, the narrative approaches of, for example Maitland. Upton then illustrates the method by studying two different readings both of which are pertinent to women's ministry. First she considers the Anointing at Bethany (Mark 14:1-10). She draws out the foil of the unfaithful disciple, that is evident in the typical Markan 'sandwich' of the text preceded by the plot against Jesus and then the mention of Judas by name at the end of the story. She also reads forward from the anointing of the body in preparation for death to the failure to anoint the body, first because of the Sabbath and secondly because of the resurrection. Central however to Upton's interpretation (2002, 107) is the courageous and inspired prophetic act of the un-named woman anointing (on the head) the soon-to be crucified and buried king. While he is still with her, she, a woman, empowers Jesus for his role of suffering servant Messiah. Her action was politically dangerous and therefore all the more courageous. In this particular interpretation then, Upton does not present the woman's service as humility, but rather as an expression of her prophetic authority (2002, 107). Such a reading with the text would be very helpful to use in a Bible study with women in Ethiopia.

In complete contrast, Upton quotes the work of Linda Maloney in her reading of 1 Tim 2:8-15 as a creative response that refuses to try to engage with the text in a re-reading, but rather imagines the text as a response to liberated women who have acted in exactly the opposite way to the text, which is then a strong response to try to bring them back under authority (2002, 108-110). I am less sure about the practicability of this method of reading in my context, although to lead Ethiopian women through an exercise of this kind, if they could imagine it, might be very liberating for them.

Fiorenza's work repeatedly indicates that the community formed by Jesus was a "discipleship of equals". She contends that this egalitarian model where roles were shared was replaced by a hierarchical, patriarchal ecclesiastical structure during the second or third century after the Jesus movement (Fiorenza, 1988, 316). Moreover, she contends further that the post-Pauline biblical literature suggests a steady loss of the egalitarian vision and the reversion to oppressive, patriarchal, hierarchical

structures, which not only led to the exclusion of women leaders in the early church 'but also relegated and restricted them to women's spheres' (Fiorenza, 1988, 310).

Fiorenza bases her claim of a discipleship of equals on the foundation that all human beings, despite their differences of gender and race are equal because each person is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). According to Fiorenza's view, all are God's children, loved by God despite our diverse nature and personality. Christians share a further equality insofar as all are baptized (Gal. 3: 28).

Women 'qualify' as disciples and apostles according to the New Testament. Thus, Nicola Slee notes in her article, 'Parables and Women's Experience', that women's 'own understanding of discipleship means that they follow him [Jesus] and themselves become apostolic eye witnesses of his resurrection, as well as of his death and burial' (1996, 48, see, Acts 1:21, 1 Cor. 15:3-9; Matt 28:9, Gal. 1:11-17; Matt 28:10, Luke 8:1-3, (Jn. 20:11-18).

Ruether expands on this helpful and common theme of female discipleship and apostleship when she observes a contrast: 'the male disciples betray Jesus, while the women disciples remain faithful to him at the cross and are the first witnesses of the resurrection' (2001, 43, see Fiorenza 1983, xii). For example, Mary Magdalene fulfils all three of the New Testament criteria to determine apostleship: she accompanied Jesus during his ministry (Carr, 1996, 27, Luke 8:1-3; Acts 1:21), saw the risen Jesus (Jn. 20:11-18; 1 Cor. 15:3-9; Matt. 28:9) and was commissioned by him even as an apostle to the apostles (Jn. 20:17-18; Gal. 1:11-17; Matt. 28:10).

Despite such strong New Testament evidence, the history of women's discipleship and apostleship has not only been forgotten in the Christian tradition but also their gifts in ministry have been ignored. The tradition has been shaped to erase the implications of the early participation of women in Jesus' ministry. A critique of this traditional biblical hermeneutics has been made by Fiorenza. She speaks of a feminist critical hermeneutics which denies the truth of the traditional patriarchal interpretation 'not only from biblical writings but also from contemporary struggle of women against racism, sexism and poverty as oppressive systems of patriarchy' (1984, 14, 1983, xiii). Although women were the true followers of Jesus like men

and saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus, the intention of the patriarchal church tradition is to limit women's ministry to the private sphere. In the EECMY since some synods reflect patriarchal views many women are excluded from decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination ministry. Nevertheless, they continue to serve the Church actively (Dunfa, 2007, 26).

1.4. Conclusion

To conclude then, this chapter shows that there is a serious lack of Ethiopian literature on the status and role of women within the EECMY. Literature available from within an Ethiopian context tends to focus more on the cultural role of women (e.g. in relation to the political arena, health and education) and pays little attention to their role within Church life. This is a serious deficiency and my thesis seeks to make a valuable contribution to fill this gap.

Widening the scope slightly, it can be seen that literature from within the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, although not directly relevant to Ethiopia or to the EECMY in particular, provides a number of valuable contributions which will be of significance when seeking to theologically reflect on the predicament of women within the EECMY later in my thesis. Most notably this literature identifies how a range of *cultural* practices surrounding birth, marriage and sexuality contribute to the devaluing of women, making it difficult for women to find a voice and have the confidence to speak. Of particular significance here seems to be women's role in domestic chores and how this strategically disadvantages them when it comes to decision-making – a point that will become even more obvious when it comes to listening to the voices of women from within the EECMY later in chapters 3-5. Specific theological reasons for the marginalization of women are also central to this literature as they are to my own work, particularly the way the Bible is used to exclude women from Christian as well as cultural contexts. The notion of partnership is pivotal to the work of Oduyoye signalling a more inclusive and mutual relationship between women and men, however in light of the problems already raised, this thesis will need to consider whether partnership is a valid response to the predicament of women within the EECMY (see chapter 6).

Western feminist literature in many ways lies at the periphery of this thesis in terms of method, however, the adoption of a western theological tradition by the EECMY makes an engagement with western feminist voices necessary and important. Central concerns raised within this body of literature carry significance for my own project, most specifically questions about democratic ministry, female solidarity and the need for service to be interpreted outside patriarchal parameters. The notion of the Church as a discipleship of equals is of considerable importance, although the notion of equality needs some critical consideration. Equality can too easily stereotype women as working in exactly the same way as men, whereas complementarity too easily reverts to women being assigned roles by patriarchy. It is also important to recognise that such feminist literature fails to speak to the specifics of African culture and to the specifics of African women's experiences in the EECMY. In so far as there is a serious omission in this respect in feminist scholarship and insofar as there are serious gaps in the African literature with a distinct lack of literature on *women's* ministry in the EECMY, a study of this kind is both timely and essential.

Chapter 2 Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology and methods I used for the fieldwork which I carried out in Ethiopia from July to August 2007 and from July to August 2008. My aim was to investigate the role and status of women in ministry within the EECMY by collecting data on women's experience through listening to their voices, conducting questionnaires and observing their involvement in Church ministry. This chapter then discusses the various methods of data collection used during my fieldwork and provides an explanation and evaluation of them.

The chapter identifies my own experience as the starting point for developing my hypothesis which led to the framing of particular research questions which in turn directed my choice of methods. The chapter provides a rationale for engaging in fieldwork and outlines the reasons for using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This is followed by a discussion of ethical considerations about the risks and benefits for those who participated in my research.

I then explain the sampling of the respondents and the locations in which fieldwork was carried out. In relation to qualitative methodology I reflect upon the use of interviews and participant observation as my chosen means of data collection; in relation to quantitative methodology, I reflect upon the use of questionnaires. As part of this reflection I consider the relative strengths and weaknesses of each method and make clear the implications these have for my fieldwork. I conclude by drawing out the key role of experience, both my own and that of my respondents in this study.

2.2 The Place of My Experience in Arriving at a Hypothesis

The starting point for this project is my own experience. I have been serving in a number of different positions within the EECMY for 26 years: 15 years as the women's ministry coordinator of the EECMY Western Synod, 1 year as a training centre director, 1 year as a Synod evangelism department director, 4 years as President of Gimbi Jorgo Synod and 6 years as Chairperson of the Women's National Committee (WNC) of the EECMY. In those roles I was able to listen to women at grassroots level who shared with me their experiences of being denied a

voice in the Church and whose ministry is not fully accepted in Church and society. Additionally, my position as a Synod President gave me the opportunity to participate in many church meetings locally, nationally and internationally where I observed the low representation and participation of women on church decision-making bodies. I have talked with women at different levels and, as they shared their experiences with me, a recurring theme emerged: that of women being denied a voice in the Church (EECMY) by a male-dominated leadership.

2.3 The hypothesis

The methodological starting point for this work then is my own observation of women in the EECMY. It is on the basis of this observation that I frame a tentative hypothesis that women within the EECMY are subordinated and marginalized and, as such, do not participate fully in the holistic ministry of the Church. I mean by subordination that women are permanently under the authority and control of men and are always given less important, private, domestic and menial roles. Marginalization is the result of the subordination of women to men in which women are relegated to the periphery and margins of ministry in the Church. Thus, women are not represented in and do not participate fully in ministry, particularly in the four areas of ministry: decision-making, policy-making in evangelism, ordination and lay leadership.

In my experience women are severely under-represented on decision-making bodies such as the General Assembly, Synod Council and Parish and Congregation Elders Committees. They are prevented from participating in a number of ways by being prevented from attending meetings by their husbands, and being silenced when they wish to speak. In relation to policy making in evangelism, they find it impossible to gain employment in the Departments of Evangelism and Theology and Ministry where policy decisions are made and they tend to be easily excluded from Elders Committees where policy decisions on budgets and plans are made at a local level. Women are finding it difficult to be ordained for a number of reasons – they are not being called by their congregations where the preference is for men and where the funding privileges men; their calling is not being ratified by synods who together with the Central Office are not pressing the local levels to support women's ordination. Lay leadership similarly privileges men for the role and relegates women

lay leaders to private, lower status, domestic roles such as hospitality and fund raising for the men. It is therefore my hypothesis that women are marginalized in those four areas of ministry within the EECMY because of cultural and theological influences.

In addition, the EECMY has also failed to implement two important policy decisions about women; first to give women 40% representation on decision-making bodies at all levels of the EECMY and second to invite congregations to call women to ordination. These issues deserve further consideration since women constitute the majority in the church (Mbuy-Beya, 1998, 10; Getu, Kanyoro and Njorge (1996, 38), currently 53% of a total EECMY membership of 5,012,484 (EECMY statistics, 2008; see Forsido, 1994, 75). It is therefore important that the voices of women are heard and the methods chosen aim to provide a platform for this.

2.4. Research questions

The following research questions have been formulated to test the hypothesis by addressing the experience of women at different levels of the EECMY and in different areas of ministry. In particular, they seek to compare the policies of the EECMY about women's representation and participation in ministry and its call of women to ordination with its practice according to men and women's experience, and within the context of Ethiopian culture. My aim is to make each question relevant to the work of my project as a whole because as Sarantakos says, it is important to indentify the appropriate research questions that relate to the topic which is going to be studied (2005, 129).

The questions are:

1. What is the current representation and participation of women in the four areas of ministry: decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordained ministry at all levels of the EECMY (Parish, Congregation, Synod and Central Office)?
2. To what extent do women at different levels in the EECMY consider that resolutions about women's ministry passed by the General Assembly have been implemented? That is to say, do women think that they participate fully in the ministerial areas described in number 1 above? Are women fully represented on

decision-making bodies at all levels? Do women know that women can be called to ordained ministry and do they think that their call to this ministry is fully accepted by the Church and then implemented by funding for training for ordination?

3. Are women marginalized in the EECMY in relation to men, in the four areas of ministry, and if so, how are they marginalized in each of the four areas? Does this result from the norms and values of Ethiopian culture and theology?

4. What are the theological and cultural reasons for the marginalization of women in ministry at the different levels of the EECMY?

5. If women are marginalised, can a theological response be constructed in conversation with women in the EECMY that challenges traditions of silence which have been exposed? Can strategic principles and practices be embraced in by women which would begin to transform their silence and address their marginalisation?

2.5 Testing the hypothesis: Fieldwork

Fieldwork has been employed within my project as the primary method of data collection. Sarantakos suggests, 'fieldwork is the systematic study of ordinary events and activities as they occur in real life situations' (2005, 202). As such, through fieldwork, there is the possibility of investigating and examining the actual life setting of the people being studied. In the context of my project this method allows me to listen to women and observe them in order to discover meanings and gather relevant information systematically.

2.6 Rationale for Fieldwork

There are three key reasons for engaging in fieldwork. The first is that there is no literature from Ethiopia which focuses on the marginalisation of women in the four chosen areas of ministry in the EECMY.

The second reason is to listen to the voices of women and their experiences of silence because there is no record of this so far and, as I have said, it is missing from literature on the EECMY and ministry. Because I want to listen to women's experience, I need to draw on feminist methods which seek to identify women's experience as a starting point for theological reflection. Ruether famously takes this view stating that 'the uniqueness of feminist theology lies not in its use of the criterion of experience but rather in its use of women's experience, which has been

almost entirely shut out of theological reflection in the past' (1983, 13). Linda Hogan agrees, suggesting that women's experience is one of the central interpretive categories in feminist theory as well as in feminist theology (Hogan 1995, 16; see, Sawyer and Collier, 1999, 100). For Ruether, women's experience is a tool to expose the patriarchy of classical theology and its 'codified tradition' (1983, 13).

By utilising women's experience, my project attempts to investigate what has been hidden by tradition. This can be understood as 'Gucaa', a traditional light made up of a bundle of sticks, which is used in the Ethiopian countryside to find what is lost in darkness. In the same way, I want to suggest that when women come together to share their past and present stories they gain a greater understanding of their marginalisation and oppression. However, Hogan emphasises that simply to record the experience of women is not enough, rather women's 'experience' needs 'interpretation, evaluation and critique' (1995, 17). This is crucial for my project as women in the EECMY have their own rich experiences which need to be collated, evaluated and interpreted.

The third reason for undertaking fieldwork is to pay attention to the context of Ethiopian women in EECMY in ways not done so far in the African literature. Fieldwork allows me to address the potential differences and similarities of Ethiopian women in their different ethnic groupings. Although these women are members of the same church, their individual experiences differ due to geographical, ethnic and linguistic diversity (Phiri, 2004, 17). Thistlethwaite warns against the dangers of ignoring the category of differences. She emphasises that 'white feminists have made a mistake parallel to that committed by white men, the assumption of common experience and hence the false universalization of what is in fact only the experience of a particular group' (1989,12).

There is also a related problem of making generalizations about Africa since as Oduyoye notes '...not all Africa is patriarchal, but the hegemony of the patriarchal mind-set strives to make it so and women have to resist this, as monolithic structures tend to be oppressive and the world cannot afford to do away with possible alternatives' (2001, 18). The danger of universalising experience is that it then so easily becomes a norm and an accepted tradition. For example, if the concept of

women's domestic role is universalised, then its acceptance spreads and patriarchal norms are extended.

Given that I am listening to the voices of women and adopting feminist methodologies, I want to avoid any assumption that this research can be 'objective'. By using my own experience of ministry and my own observations of practices in the EECMY I explicitly place myself within rather than outside of the research. As Ribbens and Edwards observe, such 'reflexivity is a central tenet of a feminist methodology whereby the researcher documents the production of knowledge and locates herself in this process for ...the subjectivity of the researcher herself is part of the research production' (1998, 49; see Gilbert, 2008, 512). Evaluation of this method by Stanley and Wise suggest that there are potential pitfalls to consider. These include indicates a problem for the researcher in dealing with the emotions, particularly perhaps when they may have to listen to harrowing stories. There is the also the question of the interviewer's own values and disposition which they bring to the fieldwork, particularly perhaps where there may be strong opposition to the researcher's values from those involved. The interviewer has to be able to manage the potentially different understandings of the subjects. Finally there is the question of power relations between the researcher and the interviewee, and in my case my awareness that my subjects would know my previous senior position in the EECMY (in Landman, 2006, 431). These problems cannot often be resolved but the researcher needs to be aware of them, allow for them where possible and be cautious when data might have been influenced by any of the factors.

2.6. General Overview of the Methodologies Chosen

2.6.1 Mixed methods approach

In order to root the investigation in context, qualitative and quantitative methodologies⁵ were used. These involved interviews, participant observation and

⁵I use the term Research methodology to refer to 'a model entailing the theoretical principles and frameworks that provide the guidelines about how research is to be done' (Sarantakos, 2005, 51). Research methodology is, therefore, a broad collection of ideas, frameworks, concepts and theories which surround the use of various methods or techniques employed to generate data. According to Sarantakos, methodology is a description or a justification of the processes, but not the methods of data collection themselves. He also describes 'research method' by referring to the way one goes about the actual process of collecting data (Sarantakos, 51). This may involve listening to people, examining documents or watching what people do. Thus, the methods of interviews and participant observation used for this research project fit within a qualitative methodology, while questionnaires sit within a quantitative methodology.

questionnaires, which, as I shall show were the most appropriate methods of discovering the information I was looking for. Utilizing mixed methods in this way provided a broader evidence base on which to situate the qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations. The use of all these methods meant that I could check for correspondences and note any differences since I was able to check data received from my interviews and observations against trends detected from the questionnaires. It also enabled me to avoid over-generalisations.

2.6.2. Sampling

Location of the fieldwork

In order to establish authentic representative groups of the whole EECMY, I adopted a purposive sampling procedure. I used this method of pre-selecting my interviewees in order to ensure, for example, that I interviewed a majority who were engaged in leadership in ministry (men and women) and grass roots members to learn their views about ordination and women in public ministry.

Six out of a total of twenty-one Synods, along with the Central Office, were selected to participate in the fieldwork in order to represent the whole EECMY (see Table 1). Two synods in the west were chosen to represent the ten synods in the western part of Ethiopia where members speak different languages, including Oromiffa, and where the Church has been influenced by the traditions of German Lutheran and American Presbyterian missionaries. They also represent those synods which have taken a lead in ordaining a woman in the EECMY. The three locations in the south were chosen to represent the six synods in the southern part of Ethiopia, all having a similar missionary background from Scandinavian countries, that is Norwegian and Finnish Lutheran missionaries. The northern and central synods are represented by one location where there has been Swedish and American Lutheran missionary influence, where the main language is Amharic and where the area is dominated by the EOC which has not yet accepted women's involvement in church ministry (Emebet, 2005, 5). All synods look to one Central Office in Addis Ababa the capital city of Ethiopia. They are also governed by one constitution.

The EECMY Central Office is the one location which is not a synod. It is the main office of the whole EECMY which was selected to investigate whether the policy decisions about the promotion of women to managerial positions at Central Office were implemented. All of the EECMY Synods are governed by one Constitution which justifies the representation of just six Synods.

An outline of synod membership is shown below in Table 1. All synods in the EECMY cover rural areas. The Central Ethiopian Synod, centred on Addis Ababa covers the largest geographical area with a relatively small membership partly because it is located in an area where the EOC is strong. The South West Synod covers the next largest geographical area and has the lowest membership. It is an area where there are many different small ethnic groupings and where evangelism is difficult.

Table 1 An outline of synod membership used in the fieldwork.

| Synod | Total Membership |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| South West Synod (SWS) | 243, 046 |
| Central Ethiopia Synod (CES) | 281, 378 |
| South Central Synod (SCS) | 505,980 |
| South Central Ethiopia Synod SCES) | 629,561 |
| EECMY Central Office (EECMY) | Included in the CES |
| Gimbi Jorgo Synod (GJS) | 254, 820 |
| Western Synod (WS) | 302, 684 |

(EECMY statistics, Annual Report, 2009)

Respondents

When it came to choosing who was to be involved in the research from each Synod/the Central Office, my main concern was to sample a range of voices - mainly women but with some male representation (particularly in the questionnaires because of the problem of literacy) from across all levels of the church congregation, parish, Synod and Central Office. As Spradley (1979) notes, ‘informants need to be chosen for the detail that they can provide’ (Burgess 1991, 77). Therefore it was important to ensure a range of voices because my aim was to investigate my research questions in detail.

Respondents in this study then included EECMY ministers, i.e. men and women (both lay and ordained) who had been serving the church in different positions at national, synod and parish level, along with congregation elders and male and female Church members not holding any office in the Church. They thus included women and men at all of the different levels of authority and leadership within the EECMY structures. However members of the EECMY Central Office did not participate in the questionnaires because they were sufficiently small in number and so could be interviewed to provide more information.

Since members are nominated to positions of leadership and identified for ordination by the congregations and parishes, my fieldwork sought to identify the attitudes of both the elders and ordinary church members towards the ministerial development of women (EECMY Revised Constitution 1997, 12, Mission Statement 2001, 3). I therefore, sought information from these grass roots members.

The leaders of the EECMY Central Office and of the synods were also key since they decide on women's representation and participation in ministry and Church life and provide directives for the implementation of decisions. The participation of these leaders in my project would provide some indication of attitudes towards the implementation of decisions surrounding women's ministry. As the follow up of policy decisions is the main responsibility of the Central Office and the synod leaders, I began my investigation at these locations where, because I was interviewing leaders, it was men who were in the majority. Specific information about respondents to questionnaires, interviews and participant observation will be discussed later.

It is important to note that men as well as women were included in the fieldwork because it is the men who make the decisions in the Church and hold most of the power. It is therefore, important to hear their views so that any barriers to women's ministry expressed can be accurately identified and confronted directly. Secondly, including men⁶ allows me to compare their responses with those provided by women,

⁶ Admitting that men and women should be represented equally under Christ could of course serve as good reason for leaving men's voices out of the conversation here since their inclusion might circumvent this equality. However, since my goal is to serve the Church as a community of equality

to note any differences and to reflect on the reasons for these. It helps me to identify whether what men think or say is happening, is actually happening according to the experience of women in the EECMY.

2.7. Quantitative Methodology

2.7.1 Rationale for Using Questionnaires

In this research project, quantitative methodology takes the form of questionnaires. The questionnaires were used to collect a quantity and wide range of data to support and re-enforce the more detailed findings from the interviews and the participant observation. Questionnaires also provided more general information about attitudes towards the role and status of women within the ministry of the EECMY.

The Questions

For the purpose of my data collection, one questionnaire with forty six questions was prepared (see Appendix 1). The questions related directly to the research questions which I set myself. The questionnaires were therefore divided into five sections, beginning with an introduction, requesting details of name, gender, location and age group. The reason for this was to facilitate analysis, in particular to know gender and location for purposes of comparison, but also to begin the questions with something that was well known and easy, to help respondents feel confident.

I then asked questions relating to the research questions on the four areas of ministry: decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination under section headings. In each of the four sections I asked about the representation and participation of women in that area, and about policy implementation and attitudinal change towards women in relation to ordination and decision-making. In the questions under the headings on decision-making and evangelism ministry I asked whether women had a voice on Church executive meetings. I also included follow up questions asking for the reasons for respondents' views in order to add a greater depth to their responses and to compare them with the findings of the interviews.

and mutuality among men and women, I have included them in the fieldwork. Despite this, however, my focus remains on women's experiences.

The questions for questionnaires were divided into four sections as summarised below:

a) Involvement of women in the ministry of Evangelism in the EECMY

The questions in this section investigate the representation and participation of women in the ministry of evangelism. I chose to ask about this area because my own experience suggested that although women were involved in outreach at local level, they were excluded from involvement in policy decisions. These include issues such as how evangelistic outreach is done, how theological education is funded and what criteria are set for deciding who may be called and funded for leadership and ordination.

b) Involvement of women in lay leadership within the EECMY

Questions in this section were designed to investigate whether women were included or not in the lay leadership ministry. I chose to ask about this area of ministry because in my experience women are not participating in lay liturgical leadership and preaching.

c) Involvement of women in ordained ministry within the EECMY

Through these questions, I explored whether women were included in the ordained ministry within the EECMY. I chose to ask about ordained ministry because it is a relatively new ministry for women and I wanted to investigate whether my respondents were aware of the decision about ordination and whether all synods were ordaining women. In addition, if women were not being ordained yet, I wanted to investigate the reasons for this.

d) Involvement of women on decision-making bodies of the EECMY

Questions in this area examined how women were represented and participated in decision-making meetings. I chose to ask questions about decision-making because in my experience women are absent from this area of ministry at all levels of the

EECMY. I wanted to investigate respondents' knowledge of and attitudes towards the representation and participation of women in an area of ministry where authority is exercised.

The full questionnaire comprising the 46 questions can be found at Appendix 1. The tables in Appendices 2 and 3 show the distribution and completion of questionnaires and Appendix 4 shows my findings. However, before distributing the questionnaires it was important to arrange a pre-test.

2. 7. 2. Pre-test of the questionnaires

It was important to conduct a pre-test of the questionnaires in order to ensure that the meaning of the questions was clear and to check the quality of the format and style of the questions. As Cazaja says, 'in the early phases, the purpose of pre-testing is to get feedback on individual questionnaire items' (1996, 21). Thus, an initial pre-test was conducted on June 25th, 2007 with individual Oromo congregation elders (two male and two female) in London.

The feedback from the pre-test enabled me to refine the format of the questionnaires and procedure for completing them. For example, the pre-test questionnaires were prepared in English but I was advised to translate the guidelines into the local language and also to increase the number of questionnaires in order to allow for non responses but still to be able to collect the amount of data I needed. I also rephrased some questions which were ambiguous or unclear because questionnaires cannot be corrected, once they have been sent and, so they must be clear and readable for the respondents from the outset (Sarankatos 2005, 253, Kumar, 2005, 126). I took care to ensure clarity of the overall content, style and structure of both the questionnaire and the instructions about how to complete questions in order to avoid ambiguity.

2.7. 3. Administration and Distribution of the Questionnaires

As suggested by Bryman and Burgess (1994, 67) a wide range of data can be collected from men and women through questionnaires via written questions.

Sarankatos writes: ‘written questioning is accomplished through questionnaires, which are administered to the respondents by mail or handed to them personally by the researcher in their homes, at work, at school or any other place, they are returned to the researcher after completion’ (2005, 239). I did not send my questionnaires by post because some of my respondents lived in rural areas where there is no post office. Additionally, I was not confident that respondents with access to post offices would collect the questionnaires. To cover the shortage of time and ensure security of the documents, I requested the women’s ministry coordinators of the synods to distribute them to each location and to collect them.

Thirty-five questionnaires were despatched and distributed to each of the six synods during the two fieldwork trips in July and August 2007 and July and August 2008. I dispatched a total of 210 questionnaires 35 each to 6 synods to be completed by members of the Synod Central Office, 3 parishes and 3 congregations. They were distributed in the following numbers:

- 5 respondents from each Synod Central Office (30 questionnaires in total)
- 2 respondents from each of 3 parishes from each Synod (36 questionnaires in total)
- 8 respondents from each of 3 congregations from each Synod (144 Questionnaires in total)

Distribution of the Questionnaires

Since the distribution of 35 questionnaires was the same for each synod this table will represent the distributions for all 6 synods (35x 6)=210 questionnaires.

Table 2

| Syn | M | F | Ord | LL | Ev | Eld. | Ord me |
|--------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| Off-5 | | | | | | | |
| Pr-2 | | | | | | | |
| Pr-2 | | | | | | | |
| Con-8 | | | | | | | |
| Con-8 | | | | | | | |
| Con-8 | | | | | | | |
| T. 35 | | | | | | | |

Explanations of the abbreviations:

Syn Synod
Pr Parish

| | |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| Con | Congregation |
| M | Male |
| F | Female |
| Ord.m | Ordinary members of the Church |
| Ord | Ordained people |
| LL | Lay leaders |
| Ev | Evangelists |
| Eld | Elders |

The Completion and Findings of the Questionnaires

Out of a total of 210 questionnaires, 180 were completed and 30 questionnaires were returned uncompleted. The response rate for the questionnaires from the six Synods was surprisingly high (85%). The reason for the high rate of return could be that the questionnaires were handed to each individual and collected when they were completed. Although the westerns synods had the highest response rate, the questionnaire results from the 4 remaining synods were also encouraging. Although the questionnaires were collected immediately from the respondents, there was some delay in receiving them back from the synods because of transport problems and weather conditions. Nevertheless, they all arrived before my departure to the UK.

The findings from the questionnaires are given in Appendix 4 and more significantly they are integrated into the argument and discussion in chapters 3, 4 and 5, where together with the interviews and participant observation they provide the evidence for the argument that is made.

Table 3 below summarises the completed questionnaires.

Table 3 Questionnaires completed by respondents from the 6 Synods

| | Q. co m | M | Ord m | ord | LL | Ev | Eld | F | Ord m | ord | LL | Ev | Eld |
|-----------|---------------|------------|----------|-----|----|----|-----|-----------|----------|-----|----|----|-----|
| Sy n. | 30 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 18 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Pr | 36 | 30 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| CO N | 114 | 83 | 24 | 16 | 16 | 12 | 15 | 31 | 11 | 1 | 14 | 5 | 11 |
| Tot al | 180 | 125 | 39 | 27 | 26 | 33 | | 55 | 23 | 3 | 24 | 5 | 11 |
| % | | 60 | 19 | 13 | 12 | 17 | 7 | 26 | 10 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 5 |

2.7. 4. Evaluation of the method of questionnaires

Strengths

Questionnaires enabled me to collect a range of data from a wide coverage of respondents and yielded quick results for my project (cf. Gray, 2005, 188). They also offered greater anonymity because there was no face-to face interaction between me as the researcher and the informants (Gray, 2005,189). The questionnaires were less expensive to administer than the interviews. They were consistent and offered a uniform measure, free from subjective differences that arise in semi-structured interviews. In addition questionnaires offered minimal opportunity for bias caused by the presence of the researcher and it is easy to measure their validity. Before sending the questionnaires two people checked the accuracy of translation of the guidelines for me to ensure the validity and reliability of the method. These people confirmed that the guidelines would enable the respondents to understand the questions. In addition, the questions were read and instructions were given by those who took the responsibility at every location (women's ministry coordinators). When I received the completed questionnaires, I was able to count them to ensure that they had all been returned whether completed or not.

Weaknesses

The limitation with this method of data collection is that usually only literate and educated people complete the exercise as questionnaires demand a certain level of literacy and need to be completed independently (Gray 2005, 189, Kumar 2005, 130). It was the case that, if illiterate respondents used translators, I was afraid that responses would not necessarily reflect the respondents' own views. However, in order to include those who are illiterate in the study, I tried to collect the same data from three of them by using an oral version of the same questionnaire conducted by me. I asked only three women two questions from each section (decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination). I piloted my method with one woman who told me that she did not want to answer every question but I could take two questions from each section. I then followed this practice with the other two women. This method raises issues which I will address in the section on ethics later in this chapter. Although the problem of illiteracy reduced the number of women

respondents to the questionnaires because of the written questions, this was compensated by the interviews as more women participated in these than men.

As English is my third language, the process of translating the guidelines (for how to complete the questionnaires) from English into the local languages was also time consuming. Nevertheless, the issue of the language was not the only difficulty with the questionnaires. I translated the guidance from English to Amharic which even has a different script and is also my second language. Additionally, I also translated it from English into my own local language of Oromo, which also took some time. One weakness with the questionnaires was that if there were any unforeseen problems with clarity of writing, formatting and style there was no way to correct these, as questionnaires do not allow flexibility. There was also the problem of delay in the return of the questionnaires to Addis Ababa from some synods.

An additional problem was that most of my respondents, both women and men, prefer telling stories rather than sitting and completing forms and answering written questions particularly the open questions. Out of a total of two hundred and ten respondents, 62, that is 34%, only partially completed their questionnaires. The parts they failed to complete were the open questions. I assumed that these people might be those who do not like writing because it was the open questions that they did not answer. Since the loss of these responses would affect my findings, that was a weakness of the method. Nevertheless, the data collected from the questionnaires provided significant evidence from a large number of people.

When we conduct questionnaires, as other methods in general, the focus of our evaluation should be not merely on the quality of the method but also on its suitability. 'The nature of the research context should be given due attention: questionnaires may be very useful in one context but not in another' (Sarantakos, 2005, 264). Thus, in balancing the strengths and the weaknesses of questionnaires I judge that they were indeed useful in demonstrating trends and in supporting the data from the qualitative methods which I now discuss.

2.8. Qualitative Methodologies

Qualitative research was appropriate for my study because it helped me to understand how and why women were silent in many areas of ministry. Merriam agrees when he says that Qualitative methodologies are ‘forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena’ (Merriam, 1998, 5). While the research was specifically focused on women and their experiences in the context of their ministries, using qualitative research allowed flexibility to pursue various aspects of this and to move into storytelling because openness is the central principle of this approach.

My experience agrees with the view of Denzin and Lincoln that qualitative research is ‘multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter’ (1994, 2). Thus I was able to move quite naturally between asking questions and storytelling which is listening to experiences described at great length and depth. Moreover, the approach of the qualitative research is open to allow for supplementary questions from the interviewer or interviewee. It is open to searching for meaning from the initial answers that are given, and the approach allows people (women especially) to speak openly. In this manner the qualitative method was provocative in that I was able to motivate particularly my women respondents whose experiences were surrounded by silence, to voice their experiences.

Qualitative methodologies helped me to collect data in unexpected ways. For example, in some of the interviews it became clear that women wanted to tell their stories. These then involved me listening to a range of stories told by women, which had not previously been documented or examined and which gave voice to their experiences. These stories enabled me to get underneath the surface of what presents itself, to the meaning and to the reasons for the behaviours that are observed.

2.8.1 Participant Observation

Marshall writes, ‘Participant observation is to some degree an essential element of all qualitative studies’ (1999, 106). It also entails the extended engagement of the researcher in the social life of those who are studied (Bryman, 2004:291).

Rationale for Participant Observation

The key reason for using participant observation as a research method was that it allowed me to collect data from the inside, by observing the speech and behaviour of people in a group when (although I have been introduced to them) they may well have forgotten about my presence, and they continue to follow their normal patterns of behaviour.

The focus of and rationale for my participant observation in both trips to Ethiopia was to observe whether women were represented on and whether they were participating in decision-making bodies and policy-making in evangelistic ministry; whether they held managerial positions; whether they were involved in lay liturgical leadership and in its related representative role on the elders committee at parish level; and whether women were being called to, trained for and able to exercise ordained ministry in the EECMY. Further, I wanted to observe whether and in what contexts women spoke with ease or with difficulty, and in what contexts they were silent or indeed silenced by others. I wanted to observe their interaction in mixed settings of men and women and in women only groups. I also wanted to know whether and to what extent women's ministry was present on the agendas of meetings, its priority or position on those agendas, and the time allotted to it.

When preparing to be a participant observer, I was able to reflect on the implications that my presence might have for data collection (Burgess, 1984, 173). In doing this I acknowledged my former positions as an ordained woman, a leader (former president of Gimbi Jorgo Synod), but I also explained my current position as a student who was among them in order to conduct research on women's role and status in the holistic ministry of the EECMY. I did this in order not to disrupt their normal activity. I was sufficiently unobtrusive that some of the participants I observed and interacted with did not feel that my presence compromised the confidentiality of meetings or their freedom to express themselves in their usual way.

Participant observation provided first hand information through immersion. I immersed myself in the daily life of the various groups in the EECMY (outlined below) where I interacted with the participants as an insider. As I am a member of the

EECMY I had full access of entry. The only question that arose was one of finance, that is, whether I was asking for funding from the Church for my transportation, food and lodging whenever I made visits to any Church meetings. However, as soon as I made clear that I would not be a financial drain on the EECMY, this issue was immediately resolved. On each occasion, the leaders of the meetings and pastors of the congregations explained the purpose of my visit and allowed me to participate in the meetings I needed to attend. I observed in all meetings and participated only on those occasions where I was invited to speak, as is usual practice for women within these settings.

The scope of participant observation

In order to achieve the goals that I had set, I chose to observe women in a range of contexts. I observed women in a number of activities, in formal meetings ranging from large councils and conventions, to executive committees and department meetings, to elders' meetings and workshops, through to informal office meetings and tea breaks to see whether they were represented at all levels and in every type of meeting, and also whether they were allowed to participate and chose to participate, and whether their experience was similar in all settings.

I observed large formal meetings of 500 people, national councils and synod conventions to observe whether policy decisions were made about women and to observe their participation in those decisions. I observed executive meetings of 20 to 30 people at national and synod levels, in order to find out how women were involved in strategic plans, in implementing policy decisions and in setting priorities and whether there were differences at different levels or in different types of meetings, for example large and small.

Central Office and national level

I observed women's representation on the staff in the Department of Mission and Theology (DMT) office and attended the Board of the DMT. I looked carefully at the agenda to see if items on women in evangelism were included. I also checked to see whether women's ordination and leadership were considered as agenda items to be discussed on Council and in DMT meetings because these meetings are the key place where the implementation of policy decisions on women's ministry should be raised.

Synod (Regional)

At synod level, I observed the Synod Convention, Councils and Executive Boards to see whether the pattern for women was the same as it was at national level.

Parish (Grassroots)

At parish level I attended the Parish Council meetings where I observed women's representation and participation

Congregation (Grassroots)

Since congregation or grassroots level is where women are the majority in attending Sunday worship, I attended and observed women's involvement in lay leadership and ordination. In addition, I observed which services women participated in to a significant level. In my observations, I also noted women's representation and participation on elders committees at congregation level.

At all levels my observations included the representation of women in lay liturgical leadership and ordained ministry, women's participation in decision-making and policy decisions and implementation of women's ordination. Findings from these observations will be integrated into chapters 3 to 5. I will now present the different types of events at different levels of the Church where I conducted participant observation.

Meetings

I observed Executive Board meetings at 3 synods which are attended by parish leaders, representatives of congregations and women leaders as voting members. I observed national Executive Board and Council meetings which are attended by the General Secretary, representatives from all synods, and the Heads of Departments at national level and to which they present annual reports for further discussion and policy decisions. The main object of visiting these meetings was to observe whether and how much women were involved on decision-making bodies, in the different areas of evangelism, leadership and ordination ministry, and in giving and/or discussing reports.

Sunday services

As well as participating in the Church meetings, I visited the Sunday worship services of six congregations in five different Synods of the EECMY. My primary intention here was to observe whether women were involved in preaching and liturgical leadership on the day that I visited so that I might be able to draw comparisons between different synods. In these places, I tried to observe the engagement of women in leadership at congregation level and the participation of ordained women in these Sunday services. I chose to attend services at congregational level for several reasons; one was that the call to ordination, women's ministry and leadership ministry, lies primarily with the congregation; another was to compare the representation and participation of women at grass roots level with the national and synod levels. I wanted to know whether and how much the congregations had followed up policy decisions and whether they had extended any call to women for these public ministries.

Workshops

In addition to the Sunday services, I also participated in three workshops conducted at national level. The first was a Pastors' and Evangelists' workshop conducted by the Department of Mission and Theology (DMT) in Addis Ababa. The participants at the workshop were from five western Synods, the region which has so far ordained 22 women in the EECMY. I purposely participated in this workshop to observe whether women evangelists and pastors would get a chance to attend the workshop.

Secondly, I participated in the EECMY Development and Social Services Commission (DASSC) five year strategic plan workshop in Addis Ababa. The purpose of the workshop was to evaluate the five-year strategic plan of the EECMY development work. My main purpose was to investigate whether women participated in the development and planning activities of the Church.

The third workshop was the EECMY family ministry workshop. Its purpose was to help women's ministry coordinators to be able to work with husbands and wives in their home locations to have an equal share in decision-making and workload in the home. It was held at national level from August 22-23, 2008 for the women's

ministry coordinators of the EECMY Synods including the representatives from parishes and congregations. The main reason I observed the workshop was to listen to and observe women from 20 synods to see whether they behaved differently, for example, giving their views freely and leading groups effectively when they were all women together rather than in meetings with men.

Evaluation of participant observation

Strengths

Participant observation, as a research method, has considerable advantages over other methods such as questionnaires and interviews. One of the key strengths was being able to observe the involvement of women not only in the formal meetings but also in the breaks between meetings. For example, I noticed that women conducted their own meetings during the tea breaks. The method also enabled me to follow trends closely and see with my own eyes how women were being treated; for example, whether when men and women raised their hands to speak, men were habitually chosen rather than women. If women tried to stand to speak I was able to observe whether they were told to sit down rather than being permitted to speak. Thus, the greatest advantage of participant observation was that it allowed me to gather first-hand information without relying on any other people or reports because I observed all of the various activities myself.

A further advantage of the method for me was that my previous roles as a leader established trust in a number of ways. They helped me to establish credibility so that I could appear as a reliable witness to my research. They also enabled me to establish a rapport with the participants (Patton, 2002, 64). In contrast, I am aware that my relationship with participants may have biased some of my results, because in some cases people may have changed their behaviour because of my presence and their knowledge of my former role.

Nevertheless, the involvement of the researcher makes the research authentic because s/he is continually involved in the process of the research throughout the authorship. As an insider I know something about women's situations in the EECMY like any other of my participants. I also spent considerable time watching women's

representation and how much they were included in evangelism, leadership and ordained ministries at a number of different meetings, for example, executive Church meetings, workshops and at Sunday worship services where I was also a worshipper. Stanely and Wise argue that ‘to ignore this personal involvement of the researcher is to degrade the personal’ (Letherby 2003, 8, Slee, 2004, 51, Harding, 1987, 9). I will return to this issue of reflexivity later in the chapter.

Weaknesses

The most serious weakness of the method was that it required considerable time and finance to reach each location as geographically there were great distances between the Synods. For example, from Central Ethiopia Synod to the Western Synod, it was 500 Kilometres. Participant observation is an expensive research method.

Another weakness was that I did not visit the Southwest Synod. Although I have collected data through interviews and questionnaires from this Synod, the absence of participant observation in this Synod affected my data because I missed the opportunity of observing the participants of both men and women in this location. Nevertheless, I did collect information through both interviews and questionnaires.

As a participant I had both to become involved in what I were observing as well as try to record on a digital voice recorder and log these observations. This was another difficulty because there could be a loss of accuracy because of multi tasking. Yet I tried to remember what was said, made a mental note and recorded my observations immediately after the session was completed. As there was a possibility of forgetting some points, this also affected my accuracy. Nevertheless, the notes helped me to recall most of the data I needed.

In the writing up process I used my journal notes in order to remember any incidents during my fieldwork. In so doing, I noted that it seemed as though some male leaders changed their behaviour while I was in the meeting, perhaps because of my former position as a leader, continuing to give a voice to women, which was not usual.

In addition, as a participant observer, I was both observing and had the specific intention of immersing myself in people’s daily lives in order to encourage women to

share their experiences with me. In this situation, it was possible to miss some of the things that were happening, for example, although they were sharing information about the exclusion of women from leadership I missed such valuable information as I was talking with a number of people at the same time.

Despite this weakness, participant observation was a helpful method of data collection, particularly in catching sight of the reality of women's situations under the surface during informal moments and gathering data on this by observing in a range of locations and at different levels for myself. Having completed the analysis of the method of participant observation, I will move to the final research method for my fieldwork which is interviews.

2. 8. 2. Interviews

Interviews were the second qualitative method used in my fieldwork. The purpose of the interview method is to access significant meanings from people's experiences. Ritchie cites Miller and Glassner (1997, 100) stating that, 'interviews provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds' (2006, 140). My purpose then was to use interviews to access women's understanding of their experiences in relation to decision-making, leadership, evangelism and ordination in the EECMY.

Rationale for using interviews

I wanted to use interviews in my fieldwork to collect first-hand accounts from my respondents on the role and status of women in EECMY. This is particularly important for women as such opportunities have not been afforded to many of them in the past. My reason accords with Gray's view that the interview method enables the researcher to gather a significant amount of information by questioning people about their feelings, attitudes and thoughts, especially if the people prefer to talk about their 'experiences rather than filling in questionnaires' (2005, 214). As already noted this is the case in Ethiopian culture where oral tradition is commonly used. Further, Dingwall argues that an interview is not simply a conversation but an opportunity which the interviewer deliberately plans in order to talk about something that interests

the investigator (1997, 243). Therefore, interviewing is the art of asking questions, listening to people and recording what is said.

There are various types of interviews among which structured; unstructured and semi-structured are the main approaches. In a structured interview the interviewer must follow pre-prepared questions requiring answers according to written questions, and flexibilities are not allowed. For example, it requires questions in the same order, keeping the same tone of voice throughout the interviews for all the respondents (Sarantakos 2005, 268). In contrast, unstructured interviews provide an interview schedule with a flexible amount of time in which the interviews will cover areas in which the respondent is interested. The unstructured interview is thus very flexible and the limitations are minimal, usually taking 'the form of guides rather than rules' (Sarantakos 2005, 268). In this manner, the interviewer seems free to move without limitation. Yet, the method seems very difficult for the interviewer to control.

Rather than either of the above, I have chosen to use semi-structured interviews because, as Gray notes, 'the semi-structured interview allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers' (2004, 217). It thus opens ways for the interviewer to describe the aim of the conversation and encourages the respondents to start expressing their views from their experiences. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility and are open to a change of approach, when required, without being completely free flowing. Through open-ended questioning and gentle probes for deeper reflection, this method of inquiry is intended to create an atmosphere of trust which will allow moments of insight to emerge from the experience of the respondents.

The semi-structured interview is used in an attempt to make clear the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing on them, that is, the respondents are free to change their mind as flexibility can be maintained. Consequently, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were deemed more suitable for my research. It also helped me to pull out meanings from the lives of women. Ritchie cites Kvale (1996) and writes: 'Knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal ... [T]he knowledge is waiting in the subject's interior to be uncovered, uncontaminated by the miner. The

interviewer digs nuggets of data or meanings out of a subject's pure experiences, unpolluted by any leading questions' (Kvale, 1996, 3, Ritchie, 2006, 139). This fits with my intention as my research attempts to uncover the deep knowledge of women directly from themselves without depending on leading questions which might predispose interviewees to answer in a certain way.

Pilot Interviews

Prior to the fieldwork in Ethiopia, four pilot interviews were conducted with two women and two men from two different congregations in London. The purpose of the pilot was to examine whether the questions were clear and understandable for my respondents (Bryman, 2004, 159, Sapsford et al., 2006, 103). Initially guide questions had been prepared for twenty Synods and an unlimited number of respondents within each location. However, the respondents from my pilot interviews advised me to limit the number of interviewees as well as the locations. Therefore, I selected only six Synods and five respondents from each Synod and from the Central Office, otherwise interviews on a larger scale would have been very hard to implement effectively. These changes helped me to conduct the interviews in a more manageable way.

Guide questions for semi-structured interviews

I prepared questions to guide me during the interviews which were open to being changed whenever required. This allowed the participants as much freedom as possible. I reflected on how best I could obtain the respondents' ideas on whether women should be involved in Church ministry in the EECMY, particularly in the areas of decision-making, ministry of evangelism, leadership and ordained ministry.

The guide questions for semi-structured interviews were around the following issues:

- The extent of the involvement of women in ministry in the EECMY
- Women's voices – opportunities to speak and identify their willingness to speak and be heard
- The involvement of women on decision-making bodies
- The involvement of women in evangelism, leadership and ordained ministry
- The possibility for transformation of women's current experience.

Since a semi-structured interview allows flexibility, the participants often introduced new ideas of interest that I had not previously considered; for example, the importance of women's groups where women can share their experiences and develop their own theology. This will be considered in more detail in chapter 6 where I explore practical strategies for change in the EECMY. Probing of interviewees' opinions rather than asking a fixed set of questions allowed for the diversion of the interview into new directions which, while not originally expected as part of the interview, helped towards meeting the objectives of my research (Gray 2005, 217). Therefore, secondary questions were adopted to develop the discussions and draw out salient points. These involved framing new questions as new ideas were introduced, omitting questions that were no longer needed and asking questions in a different order. On some occasions the interviewee moved quite naturally from simply answering questions to telling a story to answer an individual question.

Interviews as a way into storytelling

Feminist researchers highly recommend using methods of storytelling in order to transmit women's *own* hidden histories. This is well illustrated by one of my interviews that turned into story telling. In Ethiopian culture, women are often restricted from telling their stories. Since they have grown up in a male dominated culture, they are often shy and highly reserved about speaking in public and prefer silence. I experienced this with one woman interviewee. She wanted to tell her story, of how she was oppressed by her own family. Her family had stopped her education and married her to a man she did not know. She was very shy even to tell this story to me. I tried to encourage her. She was afraid possibly due to a fear of her comments being exposed. I assured her of the anonymity and confidentiality of her comments. As I continued to probe and listen to her, she began openly to share her feeling because she was encouraged by me and began to speak. By this she transformed from passive to active. This woman's experience is explained by Goriden and Nadar. They argue that storytelling changes and redefines women from passive observers to active participants in transforming history, and also that, as many stories are painful, storytelling becomes therapeutic and helps with healing (2002, 4-9).

Furthermore, this method coheres with feminist methodology which challenges androcentric knowledge production by allowing women respondents to articulate

what they feel are the most important issues affecting their lives. Giving women a voice allows them to use their *own* words to tell their *own* stories. Hobbs cites Anderson (1990, 95) and comments that, 'oral history is a basic tool in our (feminist) efforts to incorporate the previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into our understanding of the past and of the present' (Hobbs 2006, 262). Oral story is important for women to retell and forward their experiences and this is equally true for the EECMY women I interviewed.

By listening to women's stories, then, we may be able to reconstruct the muted voices of oppressed women with the specific aim of liberating such women from a position of silence (Landman, 1999a, 3). In relation to my own project, storytelling becomes a central method of gathering data because women in Ethiopia have been denied this privilege on the basis of the dominance of patriarchal culture. Oduyoye goes on to say that 'African women accept story as a source of theology and so tell their stories as well as study the experiences of other women including those outside their continent, but especially those in Africa whose stories remain unwritten' (2001, 10). Storytelling is significant for Ethiopian women because many of them are illiterate and consequently they use oral story in order to reflect upon theology (Ashena, *presentation paper*, 2004, 3). Interviews provide the forum for storytelling of women's experience which is a method by which women might be empowered and liberated.

Using the flexibility of semi-structured interviews opened various ways to ask questions back and forth because women had opportunity to retell their stories of the past and present. The method also created a relaxed, informal environment. Culturally, this informal method of interviews produces better results, as relationships could be established. After completing our interviews we went out for a meal together and completed the day, as this was important in building friendships in an Ethiopian context.

The table below shows the number and percentage of people interviewed at the national Central Office and at each of the six synods. The same number of people were interviewed in each synod and the balance of women to men was redressed from the questionnaires. In the interviews the balance was 60% women and 40% men.

See also Appendix 5.

Table 4

| Interviews by Synod | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----------|------|
| Interview | CO | CES | WS | GJS | SCS | SCES | SWS | Total | % |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | |
| F | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 21 | 60% |
| M | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 40% |
| Total | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 35 | 100% |

According to the information in Table 4 both men and women participated in interviews. These were from the Central Office of the EECMY, and from the six synods already discussed. The pattern of respondents from each synod and from the Central Office was 5 persons, 3 women and 2 men. Women were the majority (60%) of my respondents in interviews because they are the subject of my study. As I indicated in my discussion of questionnaires because of illiteracy the number of women was fewer than men. In order to redress the balance more women participated in the interviews than men (21 women and 14 men). In the following table (Table 5) I show responses from Church members across Synods:

Table 5 Interviews of Church Members across Synods

| | Tot | M | Eld. | OM | Evs | LL | Or | F | Eld | OM | Ev | LL | Or |
|-------|-----|----|------|----|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|
| CO | 5 | 2 | | | | | 2 | 3 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| Syn | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Par | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Con | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | |
| Syn | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Par | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Con | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Syn | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Par | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| Con | 3 | 1 | | | | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Syn | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Par | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Con | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Syn | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Of | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Par | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Con | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | |
| Syn | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Par | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| Con | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Total | 35 | 14 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 21 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 3 |

There were five interviewees from the EECMY Central Office, three women and two men. Both of the men were heads of section, whereas, because of the lack of women in managerial positions, none of the women held an equivalent post. One of the women interviewed was a cleaner and the other was an Internal Auditor. At synod level my interviewees were heads of Department for Mission and Theology, and the women's ministry coordinator. At parish level, it was a parish leader and one woman who was a chair person of the parish women's committee, and one person at congregation level who was an ordinary church member. In some congregations I also interviewed women elders, and women and men evangelists - as Table 5 shows.

Evaluation of the interviews

Strengths

Interviews were extremely useful in gathering data for my research. They also enabled me to have in-depth conversations with a range of people from key leaders to ordinary Church members at grassroots level.

One of the advantages of using semi-structured interviews in particular is the flexibility they allow for drawing out women's personal stories. The nature of the interview itself is reflexive. For example, initially one of the female interviewees was not willing to share with me. At the outset of the interview, she was not very comfortable because she felt I was testing her understanding with regard to her work. Thus, she responded 'why are you asking me about women's experience in the church as you know more than me'. This indicated that she, like others can be anxious about being challenged about what they considered to be their competency by a woman in leadership, which is natural. As a result she did not want to contribute much.

However, gentle probing, as in the case of the woman referred to earlier who told her story, meant that this woman also did go on to share her experience with me, even though, culturally, Ethiopian people do not like to be asked something repeatedly. In other words probing is not the custom. As she was a woman leader in ministry, her contribution was deeply significant. This example shows the reluctance of some women to speak. It can be overcome in many cases by patient waiting, affirmation and gentle coaxing. It is right to encourage women to find their voice, for their own sense of self worth and for the sake of other women.

Another advantage was that my previous position as a woman leader greatly helped me to gain access of entry to the meetings. My gender also had a positive effect, because women were more comfortable talking with me about their experiences than with men because I identified myself with them and listened to whatever they said. My social background was also a benefit because in Ethiopian socio-culture women are strongly associated with the home. When they do venture out they are more respected and shown special honour because such occurrences are rare. As a woman leader with a role outside the home, I had credibility among both women and men. Most of the Synod leaders even offered me free transportation and hospitality within

their respective Synods. Yet I discovered that most of these favours were not because of the interviews but because of my previous position and to respect the cultural background of hospitality.

Furthermore, the practical arrangements for the fieldwork were organized well. For example, I recorded many of the interviews with a dictaphone, since most of the respondents were very happy to be recorded. This enabled me to concentrate more fully on the discussion held with the interviewees (Gray 2004, 227). Although the interview method was generally very successful, there were some weaknesses.

Weaknesses

The greatest weakness of the semi-structured interview is that it is highly expensive, time consuming and slow to capture and analyse data. Since probing also demands some time, interviewing 35 people in different places took about 18 hours because each interview took 30 minutes. I also used between 2 and 3 months for transcription which continued throughout the process of my thesis. When time is at a premium the semi-structured interview may not make the best use of this limited resource. Even so it was a very effective method in terms of the quality of the data I gathered

Seven interviewees were not willing to be recorded. In such cases, I was compelled to take very short notes, which were transcribed into English. However, that led to further problems, as a small number of respondents did not feel happy with the interruption of my taking notes. Taking notes during the interviews was sometimes uncomfortable not only for the respondents but also for me as I could miss some important issues. In such circumstances, I had to make mental notes, which were written down after completion of the interviews (Bryman, 2005, 175). Although I may have lost some information through mental notes I believe that I managed to retain the most significant information. However, I recognize some loss of accuracy cannot be avoided in such circumstances.

Language was another practical problem in the course of the interviews. I translated the interview guide questions into at least two local languages, with which I could communicate and conduct the interviews. Yet again, after the interview sessions, I

had to translate the records and written notes from the two languages into English ready for transcription. This also created a possible problem of inaccuracy and was time consuming.

In order to assure the validity of my data, after the interviews were completed I asked my respondents to listen to the tape and also to read the notes that I had made during the interviews which were a summary of what had been said. Each respondent listened to his/her voice and confirmed the recording. Those who did not want to be recorded read and accepted my notes for validation. Those interviewees who were illiterate listened to the tape and I read back to them my notes made during the interview. Through these different changes there was some loss of accuracy. Nevertheless, by reading my notes and listening to the tapes I managed to collect valid information.

2. 9. Reflexivity

A key issue which emerges from all three methods of data collection is the issue of reflexivity – that is the impact of the researcher on the data collected and on the findings gathered. Nightingale, for example, notes that,

Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research (1999, 228).

It is important to note that it was never my intention to remain 'outside' the research project. This project emerges *from* my own experience as a woman in ministry and (it is hoped) will help *inform* my experience as well as others' experiences of ministry. As such, I am not impartial to its content. It is also unrealistic to consider that my role in the Church would have no impact on the participants involved in the study. As already noted, I am aware that my previous role as a senior leader in the EECMY nationally and in the Western and Gimbi Jorgo Synods could affect the participants' answers to my questions in interviews and more especially, with reference to participant observation, their behaviour in meetings that I attended. For example, I observed the behaviour of a man who knew my previous position. In the meeting, the chairperson of the meeting (a man) changed his approach from silencing a woman to giving her an opportunity to speak because he recognised that I was there

as an observer. On another occasion a senior male leader in the Church who was chairing a meeting tried to motivate women to participate more than he had done before. At another meeting, I arrived late, and sat at the back and continued my observation. A woman tried to speak but she was not allowed. Different incidents took place at different places but in some cases it seemed as though my previous position impacted on the leaders of meetings because when they knew that I was present it seemed that they tried to treat women on an equal basis to men, but when they did not recognize my presence, they reverted to patriarchal attitudes. Equally, I must accept that in interviews, for example, people may have given answers that they believed that I wanted to hear, rather than what they really thought. Such behaviours are inevitable, however they do not negate the trends detected in the findings. Questionnaires substantiate patterns discerned in both the interviews and observational recordings providing a valuable check against any potential bias. Questionnaires were anonymous and so provided a forum for participants to present their views without being directly observed by me. They were employed to gather a large number of perspectives across the EECMY and to evidence *general*, large scale trends across the Church as a whole. The triangulation of observational recordings and interviews with the questionnaire thus helps mitigate the dangers described above.

2.10 Ethical Issues Relating to Fieldwork

There are significant ethical considerations to examine when preparing for fieldwork as in any research project including confidentiality of data, anonymity of respondents and authorisation of research (Sapsford, 2006, 293). Since respondents may be sharing very personal information, it is important to assess how much confidentiality the researcher can offer. I sought to ensure confidentiality by keeping all the documents under my own supervision. I personally transcribed the interviews and also questionnaire documents. All records and field notes were kept confidentially until the completion of my thesis. I assured respondents that after completion of the research, taped recordings, field notes, and all transcribed materials would be destroyed. I also took steps to ensure anonymity for respondents by using a series of codes for the names of the respondents and for the different locations for the fieldwork. In order to demonstrate to all respondents that I was genuinely engaging in research I provided an accompanying letter from the University of Chester which

informed respondents (interviewees, those observed and those completing questionnaires) of the aims and content of the research.

In order to ensure that I had the full consent of participants in all three research methods, I used a number of methods, some of which were common to all three methods and some were different for each method (c.f. Victor, 1996, 319). First, I used the Church authorities to establish my credentials and to reassure all participants who like me are members of the EECMY. At each of my locations, at every level, the national, regional and local leaders (as appropriate) clearly gave information that I was there for the purpose of conducting research on women in ministry in the EECMY. I then explained, or in the case of the questionnaires the allocated Women's Co-ordinators explained, that if anyone did not wish to participate in my research they had the full right to leave at any point of the questionnaire completion, interview or meeting. It was thus made very clear that participation in my project was on an entirely voluntary basis. In the case of questionnaires my representatives also presented the letter from the University of Chester, which explained who I was and why I was seeking their help. They then explained the voluntary nature of participation.

Anonymity was of key importance for my respondents because of the possible consequences of being identified. For example there would be a risk for them of being marginalised if they were to be identified. Workers might lose their jobs or be demoted from their position. Even those who do not hold any position can face a problem as a church member from the leadership if they are identified. Therefore, it is essential to assure anonymity. Thus, I used coding for the places and respondents by gender. For example COS refers either to the Central Office or to one of the synods and numbers 1-7 allow me to anonymise my respondents and M/F indicates male or female. Anonymity was easier to achieve in the case of questionnaires because of their number and their more general nature.

The administration of questionnaires to the three illiterate women was problematic partly because it became a non uniform process, selecting only a few questions, reading questions, ensuring understanding and writing answers. There was a

significant measure of trust required in this deviation, but perhaps no more than was required by the interviewees. The women might have sensed a pressure to agree to complete the form orally, although the first women's clarity about only completing a sample from each section perhaps raises confidence that she felt able to control her situation. Again, it was a question of balance, seeking to include illiterate women at the possible expense of something of the integrity of the method.

Since my interviewees were speaking about the reasons for their experience of silence, in some cases they might be feeling exposed and vulnerable. Thus, all participants needed to be protected because ethically there was to be a balance between possible harm that an investigation might bring weighed against its benefits. Since the qualitative data is personal and more detailed, gave oral assurances to the respondents of confidentiality and anonymity (Ritchie, 2006, 67). I sought to avoid any hint of deception in the research by being honest and accurate in the transcription of participants' words and in the analysis of data. No names would appear in the thesis since there are codes in order to protect my respondents.

In the case of participant observation, the purpose of the research was explained to participants by the leaders of the church meetings and pastors of the congregations. As noted above, I met the ethical requirement of ensuring that contributions were on a voluntary basis. It is also important to note that my respondents benefited from the research and that this was commented on by many of them. The positive benefits of being listened to and having the opportunity to speak must not be understated in raising self-esteem and empowering women. These opportunities, which they had not been offered in the past, were given in the course of my research. From this they might gain insights, learning and improvement for their personal practices (Miles, 1994, 291).

Process of Data Analysis

Analysis of the data from the three methods (questionnaires, participant observation and interviews) consisted of three stages: firstly, the data were analysed independently. Secondly, a comparison of the analysed data from the interviews and participant observation was made. Thirdly, the data from these two methods were

examined alongside data from the questionnaires for the purposes of triangulation (Dingwall, 1997, 31, Foster, 1996, 9).

The Process

I analysed the data manually according to the following process:

Interviews recordings were transcribed and printed out. This enabled the transcripts to be examined and coded. Emerging patterns and themes were then categorized through colour coding and handwritten annotations. In a similar way participant observation journal notes were collated, coded and emerging categories identified (Hammersley, 1996, 291). For the questionnaires, simple percentage calculations of positive responses to each multiple choice question were made-. The results were then broken down according to category of respondents, that is male or female, elder, ordinary member, evangelist, lay leader or ordained minister at national, regional or local level (see table in chapter 2).

I then examined data from the interviews and participant observation side by side and carried out a comparative examination of the identified patterns and themes, looking for similarities and differences which helped to identify categories and their relations in order to test the hypothesis (Bolton and Hammersley (eds), 1996, 292). Where similarities were found, I noted how the data from the two methods supported each other and where patterns were confirmed themes were identified and selected for further investigation and discussion. Of particular consideration was noting where participant observation supported the views of respondents in interviews. Where differences in the two sets of data emerged, I noted the details should further cross-referencing be required.

Data from the questionnaires were then used to for triangulation of the data. This enabled me to look for confirmation of patterns and themes in general and patterns relating to the views of different categories of respondents.

From my analysis of the three methods of fieldwork data, a number of categories concerning women and ministry were identified. However, given my research questions focused on four specific areas of ministry and my hypothesis expressed my contention that women were silent/ced in these four particular areas of ministry –

namely decision-making, evangelism-policy making, lay leadership and ordination – I sought to address what the data revealed about these areas specifically.

These areas are key because they are strategic ministerial areas which dominate and guide the various aspects of the holistic ministry of the EECMY and where women could be described as silent and silenced. As such they were used as a framing and structuring tool for my findings. They both constitute the starting point for my reflection on the data and also emerge out of the data as my hypothesis is confirmed.

2. 10. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the focus of this investigation, the silence of women in ministry was identified through my own experience leading to the specific hypothesis from which came the research questions on the four areas of women's ministry as well as a rationale for the use of fieldwork. I argued that the fundamental rationale was giving women a voice as a step towards their liberation.

I argued that a mixed methods approach enabled me to collect a wide range of data and provide triangulation of results. Interviews and participant observation provided depth and specificity, whilst interviews and storytelling provided significant opportunities for women to find their voices. Questionnaires then provided supporting evidence allowing a greater coverage through a similar but larger representative group, covering all levels and areas of the EECMY. I have also argued that although women's voices take priority for the reason already given, there is a place for male voices in my project because they hold the authority to give decisions on women's representation and participation in Church life.

The fieldwork method has been fundamental for investigating women's experience which has been mute for such a long period of time and which has not been investigated at all in any literature in Ethiopia. Through the fieldwork research women's stories have been uncovered. Having explained why and how I undertook the fieldwork research and, I have also shown the process of data analyses and how I used the three methods in my project. I now turn to consider how the findings of the fieldwork help inform our understanding of the current role and status of women in

the holistic ministry of the EECMY. The following three chapters identify in what ways women are silenced and why women are silenced.

The next chapter shows how women are silenced in decision-making and the ministry of evangelism specifically.

Chapter Three

The Silence of Women in Decision-making and in the Ministry of Evangelism

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I argue, from data gathered from my fieldwork, that many women within the EECMY are silenced in two particular areas of ministry: in decision-making and in the ministry of evangelism⁷. Taken together with Chapter four, which addresses the silence of women in relation to two further areas of ministry, namely those of leadership and ordination, this chapter identifies the various *ways* in which women are silent within the EECMY. The key observations from chapters three and four will be summarised at the end of chapter four. The *reasons* for this silence and how this silence might be challenged and transformed will be the focus of chapters 5 and 6 and so will not be dealt with directly here. Ultimately, this chapter aims to show that women are excluded from strategic managerial positions and how this has made them silent in decision-making and strategic policy-making for evangelism ministry at all levels of the EECMY. It also shows how women in the EECMY are relegated to subordinate and menial roles, such as the serving of food, tea, coffee etc. at Church meetings rather than representing and participating in all areas of Church life.

3.2. The Means by which Women are Silent/Silenced

In this section I will address the central question at the heart of this chapter, namely how are women silenced in Church ministry within the EECMY. Here attention is given to the ways in which women are silenced at every level of the EECMY's organizational structure: at national, regional and local levels. Attention is given to the ways in which women are silenced in meetings and events taking place within the

⁷ Decision-making and Evangelism are two areas of the Church where women are absent and this has increased the silence of women in relation to management although women do participate in practical evangelistic outreach ministry. Since both decision-making and the strategic aspect of the ministry of evangelism are more related to management I have placed these in one chapter in order to explore how women are silenced in church structures in relation to both areas of ministry. The remaining themes, lay leadership and ordination, are more related to leadership ministry. Therefore, it is meaningful to discuss them separately from decision-making and evangelism in order to show the silence of women in preaching and teaching as well as the administering of the Sacraments.

Church's structures and to the ways in which women are silenced through the various roles and positions they do or do not perform. Four central methods of silence are identified from my fieldwork data: the purposeful exclusion of women from church meetings; the deliberate silencing of women's voices at meetings; the ridiculing of women's voices at meetings; and the failure of women to speak in decision-making meetings. Although I will discuss the nuances of how women are silenced throughout the course of the chapter, these four provide an important context in which to position a more detailed analysis, let us therefore consider these four methods.

3.2.1. By Being Excluded from Decision-making Meetings

Exclusion from meetings makes women literally invisible and literally silent because they are forced to be physically absent. The issue of women's exclusion from meetings was widely discussed by different respondents. Sometimes women are excluded from being present at meetings by their male line-managers. For example, one of the female interviewees told me the following story which took place at synod level:

I was recommended by my local congregation to participate in executive meetings at all levels (Parish to General Assembly level) for the next four years. At one executive meeting of my own synod I spoke against a person in whose leadership I did not have full confidence, but my boss highly supported him even to the point of suggesting him for another position at the regional level. My boss wanted to force me to follow his idea and give support to this person to nominate him to a higher position. As I was not convinced by his capacity for this position I did not give him any support. After this my boss became very disappointed with me and when we returned home, he arranged a meeting and expelled me from any further meetings. As a result of this incident, my name was cancelled from all meetings and I was totally excluded (I, 35, COS3FCON).

Many women also commented how women are excluded from decision-making meetings. A woman representative told me that, 'although I was officially represented by parish council, the president replaced a man at my place for attending the Synod Council' (I, 35, COS5F). The first interviewee's line-manager never expected her to speak against him because it is extremely rare to do so. Rather it has been the practice for women to always follow the male's views rather than their own. This woman knew the risk she was taking but she wanted to be a role model for other women. She spoke the truth as she saw it and suffered the consequences.

Thus, we can see that, even though the EECMY's policy decisions theoretically enable women to represent others and participate in meetings, this is often not the women's experience in practice. In this case, speaking the truth was costly because the woman was not supported by either male or female participants.

The case of the second interviewee was very systematic and devaluing of her representation. There could be various reasons why a woman was replaced by a man and thus excluded: One possible reason could be that the man was very close to her boss rather than her and supportive of this parish leader. The other reason could be that the woman was active and one of the challengers for women in the meeting. Thus, the parish leader did not support her and denied her the right she had been granted by her local congregation. This could be seen as structural oppression because, as parish leader, he was represented the structure.

Oduyoye, in recognising the reality of women's silence within African communities tells women that they 'must challenge oppressive structures' whenever injustice occurs (1990, 6). The situation of the above woman demonstrates structural injustice because she was representing the local structure but encountered opposition by the very next structural level at parish office. This highlights Oduyoye's view that women are oppressed by the church structures and this needs to be challenged by women themselves. Thus, such ways of challenging could be helpful for women in the EECMY as there are many oppressive structures which exclude women from meetings. The silence of women at congregational level is evidenced by 67 out of 83 male respondents (i.e. 80%) who acknowledged this, while at synod level 17 out of 18 female respondents (i.e. 94%) evidenced the invisibility of women at synod meetings (such as Convention, Council and Executive Boards).

3.2.2. By Not Being Permitted to Speak

In the EECMY to maintain order, speaking in any meeting needs permission. Thus both men and women must speak through the chairperson. However, a woman respondent said 'most of the time I experience difficulties in getting permission (from the male chair) to speak on decision-making bodies' (I, 35, COS2F). A male respondent also commented,

I hated going to meetings as I have a guilty conscience when I see that women are denied a voice. For example, once a woman did put her hand up to share some thoughts but the chairperson did not permit her to speak. The woman also told me her concern at tea break. As she was so sad, she said nothing through the rest of the day (I, 35, COS4M).

According to this respondent, women are not permitted to share their thoughts because their request to speak is ignored. Such ignoring may be a very deliberate attempt to silence women or it may be unconscious; an inability to identify women as potential contributors to a meeting. Either way, such behaviour is sexist since it excludes women on the basis of their sex. Fiorenza comments that, 'silencing of women in the church engenders our ecclesiastical and theological absence' (Fiorenza, 1985, 182, see Ortega, 1995, 3). Thus, she highlights how the women, who are the majority in the church, are forgotten and not heard, because when they wish to speak they are not chosen to do so.

Nevertheless, the response of the male interviewee shows that some men are sympathetic towards the situation of women and supportive of them. This comment regarding the woman draws out the damaging impact of being silenced; the woman stopped trying to share her contribution, perhaps because of disappointment or even humiliation and a sense of powerlessness, which affected her confidence. As a result, the church loses this woman's contribution which also hinders her growth and development.

A number of women commented on the fact that they were not given permission to speak. For example, one woman commented that 'a number of men participants on the Council at national level had their hands up and were allowed to speak but women did not get permission as often as the male participants' (I, 35, COS6F). I also observed the same meeting where three women at the same time raised their hand to speak but the opportunity was given to a man rather than to any of the three women. Again, oppressive patriarchal power relations are evident here. Such action by the male chairs, however, is not only against the constitution of the church but also against the constitution of the state under which Ethiopian women are granted full freedom of speech (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995, 92). Furthermore, the action appears to breach women's human rights as it denies equal participation (Zeleelew, 2005, 8). Zeleelew goes on to suggest that

equality in function between men and women can only be achieved if both are in equal positions to participate in the decision-making process at all levels (ibid, 7).

In relation to this structural problem of oppressive male power, Oduyoye asks metaphorically ‘who will roll the stone away?’ (Oduyoye, 1990, 13). Originally this question was asked by the women who went to the tomb of Jesus. The stone on the tomb was huge and higher than their capacity. In the content of patriarchy, although God can perform a miracle at any time, women must struggle to use their collective power by adding more women in meetings and continually raising questions in meetings. This is also similar to the Syro-Phonician woman who challenged Jesus which we will discuss further in chapter 6.

3.2.3. By Their Words Being Ridiculed or Ignored

Being ridiculed is another painful device to lessen the impact of women’s voices. One woman interviewee responded that,

I am one of the Synod Executive Board members and one day I shared my contribution on how to manage the current budget constraints at all levels but since many participants did not want to discuss it, they laughed at me. Particularly the man who was sitting by my side told me your tone is not good (I, 35, COS6F).

Even though this woman was speaking about an important issue, no-one gave consideration to her proposals. The person who objected to her ‘tone’ chose to listen to that rather than to her ideas. It is not clear from this whether the man had simply used the woman’s tone as a pretext for not hearing her words, or whether he had not made the necessary effort to get behind the tone to the message because her tone was not acceptable for the man as she was being assertive. If it had been a man speaking would the one sitting next to her have commented on the tone. I wonder! Another woman recalled a similar experience, ‘I was told by a male friend to keep quiet when I boldly voiced my opinion on women’s non representation in top managerial positions. I felt that I was ridiculed because my ‘friend’ was opposed to my views’ (I, 35, COS5F). To speak out so directly in confronting male dominance presents a direct challenge. It is against the sexist view of female passivity and silence (Kasahun, 2006, 3) and it presents a direct assault on male power. This is the system men use to silence women. Can we find ways to make women speak? How? Although this is my task in chapter 6, if the woman here had been accompanied by another woman, her view would have been supported. Thus, Slee argues that, ‘It is

impossible to claim my voice and authority as a woman alone. I need the company of other women to help discover who I am, to help me speak out what I know' (2004, 71). The company of other women could help in resisting the disrespect that men show to women on decision-making bodies. Women then have to contend not only with ridicule and hostility, but also lack of support from other women because of their low representation on decision-making bodies.

In both comments in this section women's contributions were ignored by the men because it seemed that they did not want to confront difficult subjects which would give recognition to both women's abilities and their rights in a public forum. Deressa contends that in Ethiopia 'women were undervalued and treated as second-class citizens' (2003, 2, see Abdisa, 2002, 13). She speaks of the cultural issues which we will deal with in chapter 5 where Ethiopian culture does not support women's public speaking. However, this is also true for the situation of the above women who were denied the opportunity to speak because of hostile attitudes and words. It is often answered that men speak in a systematic and direct way whereas women lack a logical way of speaking. Interestingly in the above examples, exactly the opposite happened, and the men concerned could not accept the direct approach of the women and responded in an unsupportive and negative manner in order to silence the women.

3.2.4. By Their Failure to Speak

Another way in which women's silence occurs is when women choose not to speak themselves. A male respondent in an interview said that 'although women are allowed to participate in Synod executive meetings, they do not in fact participate as they should' (I, 35, COS3M) (pastor). A woman expressed her view that 'many women in the meeting do not have enough confidence to speak in the presence of men' (COS2CONF). Another woman respondent expressed fear and lack of confidence in speaking at her congregation Elders' meeting as a result of being in a minority of one. She says, 'very often I prefer listening rather than speaking. Sometimes, although I try to speak, I am afraid because I am the only woman in the elders' meeting' (I, 35, COS6CONF). Such responses point to a lack of confidence in some women as a significant reason for their silence, and also suggest that, by remaining silent, women are failing to fulfil their responsibilities as elected

representatives. Further, the response again highlights the impact of the low representation of women on decision-making bodies leaving the lone female individual isolated and unsupported in an unsupportive and hostile environment. I came to the same conclusion as the male respondent above when I observed the silence of many women at large meetings such as the National Council meeting. Women themselves also have internalised the assumption of their passivity. A further key point for women's silence is that the men do not want to give women opportunities to speak in public because they hold the sexist view that public speaking is a male role.

In addition, other facts may be influential in the failure of women to speak. For example, I observed a council meeting at national level where the media was in Amharic. There was a woman who did not know a single word of Amharic but she was there for 7 days without saying or even understanding anything from the meeting. This is just one example, as there are many women who have their own reasons for failing to speak. I will come back to this in chapter 5 when we deal with reasons for silence of women.

Having considered the variety of ways in which women have been silenced, it is important to now develop this further through a more specific consideration of the key areas in which women are silenced. The remainder of this chapter therefore discusses the silence of women in two important areas of Church ministry, decision-making and evangelism. It considers the ways in which women are silent/ced in these areas at every level of the Church (i.e. at national, regional and local levels) and discusses the serious consequences such silence raises for the Church.

3.3. The Silence of Women in Decision-Making

In using the phrase decision-making I am referring to the meetings of Church bodies, where policies and policy decisions on important matters such as budget, staffing and strategic plans for the whole Church at the National level and then different levels of the Church, Synod, Parish and congregation can be made. The silence of women in decision-making meetings is most evident in two areas of representation and participation. By participation, I mean the contribution that a participant can make in a meeting. By representation I mean the selection of women to represent a

constituency at any one of the four levels, for example, they might represent their congregation by being one of the elders of the congregation. They might as an elder then be selected to represent their congregation at synod level. They might then be chosen by the synod to represent the synod at national level. Having understood these technical terms, we shall use each of them where required in the following discussions.

3.3.1. Inadequate representation on Decision-making Bodies at National Level

The Central Office and its departments implement the policies of the main decision-making bodies (the General Assembly, the Council and the Executive Board) at National level (Furslund, 1993, 62). It appears to have been assumed by senior leaders and by others that to make and accept a policy is sufficient to claim its implementation. For example, a male interviewee said, ‘women’s representation on the General Assembly is compulsory because the policy decision has already allowed women’s full representation’ (I, 35, COS1M) (pastor). Another male respondent similarly noted that ‘women’s representation on the Assembly makes the Church meeting inclusive’ (I, 35, COS1M). These perceptions are further supported by presidential assurances. The views of the above respondents show that women are fairly represented on decision-making bodies at National level. However, since the full 40% do not attend, it is unclear whether there is actually 40 percent representation. However, the former EECMY President, Yadasa in his presentation to the EECMY Women’s Day, confirmed that the Church has fully implemented the policy decisions (Yadasa, 2002, 64). The Associate General Secretary, Yohanes, also confirmed that women’s involvement on decision-making bodies is being practised within the EECMY (Yohanes, 2002, 66). Since these developments are confirmed by EECMY senior leaders it seems reasonable to assume that the policies have been implemented. Indeed, in one sense they have since every synod indicated that of its representation are women. They are not required either to give their names or to give details of their parish or congregation. However, findings from my fieldwork showed that in reality representation is far less than 40% of its representatives.

Indeed, the experience of women at National level contradicts these assurances. For example, one woman respondent maintained that, ‘women are allowed to attend meetings but their representation is less than that of the males since some Synod

leaders do not select women but even women's quota is filled by men' (I, 35, COS1F). Another woman similarly pointed out that, 'women's representation on the Assembly is much better than before, although their number is still less than the men' (I, 35, COS1F). A male respondent remarked significantly that 'some Synods do not bring as many women to the [national] meeting as their quota allows and this reduces women's representation in the Assembly' (I, 35, COS1M). From these examples, it seems that women's experience of the General Assembly does not agree with the way that most men see women's representation on decision-making bodies. Although the first and second examples above demonstrate the inequality of representation given by the policy decision, which gives men a 60% representation, while limiting to 40% women's representation this is not the key point, as the third respondent recognised. It is much more significant as the third respondent recognized that women are under-represented. For a number of reasons synods choose not to bring their full quota of women to the General Assembly. For some Synods, the women's quota is given to the men rather than the women. The effect of this is to side-line women and their contributions.

Although Tsegaye suggests that the Quota system helps to bring more women to meetings (2005, 103) and Biseswar argues that it supports women because it allocates a given percentage of the seats in decision-making meetings for women (2005, 10), still women's representation remains significantly below its 40% target within the EECMY national meetings. I observed a meeting of the General Assembly which had a total membership of 266 but only 79 women were present (30%) (I, 35, COS1). I also observed the Council meeting, which had a total membership of 109 with only 28 women members (26%). In these cases the quota system did not work as well as it might because the Synods brought fewer women than the quota system allows. What this essentially shows is that women are under-represented at both meetings at National level and that women's representation is far below the designated 40% set out in the policy decision. Consequently it appears that the quota system carries little weight.

The poor representation of women is all the more serious when it is set in the wider context of the numerical strength of women in the Churches. First, women are in the majority in the EECMY. Next, African feminist theologians maintain that women

make up between 60-70% of the congregation in Christian churches and even more than 70% in churches in Africa (Kanyoro and Njorge 1996, 16, see Mengistu and Gorge 1994, 37). These figures are supported by Tsegaye who indicates that all decision-making in Ethiopia is male dominated, although women constitute more than half of the population of the country and the Church as well (2005, 15). It is true that in Ethiopian culture, men always dominate the public sphere while the private is reserved for women (see, Nyengele, 2003, 235). This is equally true in the EECMY Central Office where men are the majority on the decision-making bodies. Of course, if women could become involved in decision-making, even to the extent that the EECMY policy permits, they would have a much better representation than at present and would have more opportunity to voice women's concerns. Genene, for example, comments that women's 'involvement in top decision-making positions should greatly help in giving voice to women's issues and concerns in policy formulation' (2005, 18, see Mengistu and Gorge 1994, 36). Moreover, the presence of women in top decision-making would help to bring about an awareness of women's issues such as women's under-representation at Church meetings, and their absence from strategic positions (in evangelism, for example). In addition, women's presence on decision-making bodies would contribute to the voicing of women's concerns surrounding low levels of education and lack of attention to their call to ordination. However, even though women's involvement along these lines is crucial, the reasons for their silence, as chapter five will seek to make clear, are both cultural and religious making any solution complex and difficult. Despite this, it is clear that if women are few in number in the top decision-making roles at National level, then their voice becomes easily submerged under the views of the male majority. As such, increasing women's representation at this level seems essential.

We also need to consider women's representation in decision-making meetings other than the General Assembly at National level. A male respondent commented that, 'as the policy decision allows, women are not only allowed to speak and are fully guaranteed to be heard but they also have full rights to elect and be elected to top leadership positions at the Central Office' (I, 35, COS1M). It is certainly true that, based on the policy decision, women ought to have places on Church decision-making bodies since they are permitted to speak and have rights to participate in elections as well as to be elected. This was reinforced by one of the Church senior

leaders who said that ‘sooner or later women would be elected at the National level’ (COS1M) (pastor). The respondent spoke from his conviction about the policy decision because it allows women to be elected to senior positions. This however, seems an unattainable ambition because up to this present time the EECMY National level has not elected any woman to top managerial positions (COS1F). Nevertheless, Ashena commented that in the elections to be held at the 17th EECMY General Assembly in 2006 women would run for the presidency (2005, 12). This also seems to be another example of wishful thinking because there was not even one woman candidate in the last election; all of the candidates were male (EECMY 18th General Assembly 2009). Nevertheless, some former Presidents and Vice Presidents argue that they have attempted to encourage women’s representation on decision-making bodies. For example, the former President of the EECMY, Estfanos, at the National Assembly encouraged all the members to increase representation of women at the General Assembly, General Council and in strategic managerial positions in the Central Office. Indeed, it was he who proposed the increase in representation from 25% to 50%.

I had been struggling using the different opportunities I could get at the time before the 14th General Assembly so that women can participate in the different meetings and positions of the Synods...parishes and congregations of the church without any distinction (EECMY General Assembly, 1993).

Unfortunately, however, both the formal constitutional policy statements and the theoretical statements of Presidents must be compared with the actual experience of women’s representation. What the fieldwork demonstrated is significant under-representation. However, what representation there is, it is not effective unless women participate in the meetings. We move on now to examine the area of inadequate participation.

3.3.2. Inadequate Participation In Decision-making Meetings at National level

The interviews that I held at national level showed clearly that the church has failed to encourage or even allow women to participate. Of many responses, one woman interviewee spoke of her experience of being silenced and ignored.

Although the policy decision allows women to speak and have a voice, most of the time women are not permitted to speak. For example, I wanted to comment on the insufficiency of staffing in the women’s office because at the time there was no-one in the office. The leader of the meeting did not permit me to express my concern about the work although I continued to try to persuade him. Finally, I was offered a chance to speak but my comment was ignored even by the participants because I am a woman (I, 35, COS1F).

In this case the woman's contributions were ignored. She was prevented from speaking on strategic subjects such as staffing the women's office, upgrading women's coordination office to the Department and proposing to add more sections. Currently, there is little plan for women's empowerment in order to move forward women's ministry within the holistic ministry of the EECMY because women hardly participate in the Church life.

Such experiences demonstrate the invisibility of women as described in feminist and liberation theology. Soskice, for example, comments that 'voicelessness ...does not mean simply that these individuals or groups are not consulted ...but suggests more strongly even when they are consulted, their opinions, desires and needs are not heard' (Soskice 1996, 112). Behind this statement lies a further important consideration about the lack of value given to women's ideas, opinions, and needs. The reason for this seems to be simply that the views are voiced by women, for when the same views are voiced by men they are at least accepted and even on some occasions, commended.

I also observed that, although many women in the Council meeting raised their hands to speak, they were not permitted to do so. In addition, one woman who was allowed to speak, stood up and spoke against denying women a voice in that meeting. Moreover, two women spoke about the denial of women's voice at that meeting and were supported by the other woman but there was hardly any response to the issue that the two women raised because the chair person passed over their voice. Furthermore, the questionnaires from women at a synod office showed that women at regional meetings were fewer than men. This was supported by 23 women out of a total of 31 (74%). Although women sought to speak there was partiality in taking the contributions of the participants. However, the comment of the woman in the above example was not considered by the participants or by the leader. I realized then that women's voices were not heard in this Council meeting. These experiences resonate with Pemberton's comment that the church of Africa has failed to give women a voice (2003, 100). Nyengle supports this view and argues that, 'it is a call for the church, and society, to listen to women's... concerns' (2003, 83). By listening to women, the church also fulfils its own calling to liberate those who are oppressed. As Ruether asserts, 'feminist liberation theology starts with the understanding of church as a

liberation community' (1983, 201). This cannot be done unless the whole Church, men and women, listens to the painful voices and stories of women. Specifically, the EECMY is called to listen to women's stories and to act on their cry for liberation from oppressive structures and behaviour.

The former Director of the EECMY Department for Mission and Theology (DMT) acknowledges that the Church still has a long way to go before women are empowered and are fully participating members of the Church. He said, 'although a long time has passed since this [policy decision on women's involvement] was theoretically decided, not many women have been given a voice at the National level (Shata, Women's Year, 2001, 70).

The silence of women at National level has been evidenced from the interviews, participant observation and questionnaires. Although there were no questionnaires at the National level, I distributed to the 3 levels as some questionnaire questions included all levels. We now move to examine the silence of women in the EECMY at regional level.

3.3.3. Inadequate Representation on Decision-making Bodies at Synod Level

Constitutionally, the EECMY regional level runs three policy decision-making bodies: the Synod Convention, the Synod Council, and the Synod Executive Board (EECCMY Constitution, 2005, 32). Although there is a policy decision which supports women's representation, a range of data from the fieldwork showed that there is inadequate representation of women at the Synod level. For example, a woman respondent said that 'usually on average there are 7 women on our Synod Council from a total of 68 members. I can say women's representation in our Synod is unfair' (I, 35, COS5F). According to her comment women's representation on this Synod Council was about 10% which is much less than the 40% recognised by the policy decision. A further specific acknowledgement of under-representation comes from the following male respondent who said, 'I am a member of a regional Council where the total membership is 75 of whom only 8 (11%) are women' (I, 35, COS6M). Similarly, responses from the questionnaires showed that women's representation at the Synod level was insignificant. This was evidenced by a total of 16 out of a total of 31 respondents (89%) (Q13, DM, COSF). My data revealed that

women were under represented at the higher decision-making bodies of these Synods such as Synod Convention, Synod Council and Executive Board as well as DMT. These meetings are where important Church policy decision are made and implemented. They are strategic managerial positions where women's representation was very low. Therefore, one strategy to silence women is not to elect them to membership of these decision-making bodies.

We know that after the policy decisions were made there was no structure remaining to prevent women from full participation in the work of the Church. However, there is a strong tradition of excluding women from decision-making at regional level. Swart from South Africa recognises that 'tradition and non-inclusiveness by the male-dominated hierarchy make it difficult for women to be part of the decision-making body of the church' (Oduyoye, 1990, 148). Nevertheless, it is the role, not only of men, but also equally of women to actualise the church's service in the world as both have been called. Yet, the male dominated church structures have prevented them from fully participating in the decision-making meetings. I also believe that the involvement of women on decision-making bodies at regional level is one expression of what the actual work of the Church needs to be. In both examples women's representation was much less than the 40% which it should be. Getachew from the EECMY has also noted that there are few women in these decision-making bodies and that in this way they are unjustly denied a voice within their own Church (in Oduyoye, 2001, 85).

In contrast, in two EECMY Synods women's representation seems more positive. For example, a male respondent said 'we do not run any meeting if there are no women members on our executive meetings' (I, 35, COS4M). He explained that 'if a particular parish reduced women's membership from the Council meeting by one or more, then the Synod would also reduce the same number from the membership quota of the parish' (I, 35, COS3 & 4 M). That is to say, the vacant places could not then be taken by men. The effect is that women's representation becomes one of their criteria for a quorum, without which the meeting cannot run. I also visited these particular Synods' Councils and observed that women's representation was encouraging. Women's representation in each of the above mentioned Synod Council meetings was 37% (I, 35, COS3 & 4). However, although these Synods have a

positive view of the representation of women on decision-making bodies, the percentage still shows slightly less than the targeted figure of the policy decision (40%).

Women's representation on Synods' Executive Boards is different from those of the Convention and Council. In one of my study locations, a woman commented that 'as a general rule, 4 places are reserved for women on the Executive Board. For example, in my own Synod, from a total number of 39 Executive Board members, 4 are women according to its principle. But this does not fit with the policy decision of the Church which should be 40% in every executive meeting' (I, 35 COS3F). From another Synod a man said that 'in my Synod there are four women on the Executive Board out of a total membership of 36' (I, 35 COS4M). For these respondents, on the one hand, the representation of women on both Synods' Executive Boards is the precise figure in line with the principle of the Church for this meeting. On the other hand, their comments asserted that the principle of the Executive Board contradicts the existing policy decision of the Church on women's representation. If this is the case, then the policy decision setting women's representation at 40%, should take precedence over the more local decision to reserve four places for women because the former has been agreed by the whole Church at the highest level.

3.3.4. Inadequate Participation on Decision-making Bodies at Synod Level

When we say participation, it reflects women's sharing of ideas in meetings and in every area of Church life. When women are elected to Synod Councils or Executive Boards their participation in the actual decision-making meetings at this level is a challenging issue which raised enthusiastic discussions among my respondents in every location. A male respondent, for example, noted women's silence in speaking in meetings at the regional level, 'Women are allowed to contribute their thoughts at the Synod Convention at regional level although many of them are not very open to share their ideas in the presence of men' (I,35,COS7M). According to this interviewee, the main reason for women's silence seems to be both the presence of the male participants and their own choices. If the presence of men leads to women's silence then this could be understood as women being silenced by men (something done to them by men).

A woman told me that, 'the men sometimes reduce women's participation without saying a word simply by looking at them by unpleasant faces' (I, 35, COS5F). Such hostility could reduce women's participation because it might make a woman forget what she was going to say, and reduce her confidence. On the basis of such treatment women then choose not to speak, which is their own choice but has been caused by men's hostility. Since some women are conditioned to fear men they lose confidence which again reduces their participation and this downward spiral continues.

In other contexts, however, women speak but are literally silenced by men. For example, one particular woman respondent said, 'I always tried to share my ideas at Council meetings but the chairperson did not permit me to speak. As I continually held my hand up I was allowed to share. Yet, I was told to stop before finishing the points I wished to make' (I, 35, COS6F). In this case, a woman was allowed to speak but her contribution was limited in two ways. First, the chairperson was slow to give her a chance to share her ideas. Second, her contribution to the meeting was jeopardized as she was cut off by the chairperson before she had completed the point she was trying to make (Yadasa, 1997).

Perhaps the chairperson considered the time schedule rather than her contribution. However, we might consider whether a man speaking for an equivalent length of time would be silenced in the same way. It is important to remember that according to the EECMY Constitution a voting member has a right to contribute her/his idea to a meeting. Denying women such a right undermines this church policy decision (EECMY Constitution, 2005, 77, Article 35, 8.4).

My fieldwork showed then that decision-making meetings at regional level in most of my locations are controlled by male chairpersons and that women are silenced in these decision-making bodies in four ways, namely: they were either not elected or not permitted to attend, their voice was ignored, they were not permitted to speak and they also chose not to speak. The only exceptions were the two Synods mentioned earlier where women's participation was better than in the rest of the EECMY, although we cannot say women's participation was sufficient. Having understood the inadequacy of women's participation, it is important to explore the situation of

women in decision-making at local level in order to observe whether there is any difference at this level.

3.3.5 Inadequate Representation on Decision-making Bodies at Parish and Congregation Level

From the possible number of decision-making bodies at local level, I will focus on representation on the Parish Council and Congregation Elders' Committee. It is important to remember that at this level women are the majority who attend Church services and it is important to examine whether they are equally involved on decision-making bodies. Traditionally, the Parish Council meets every three months, whereas the Congregation Elders' Committee meets at least twice a month. Women's representation at the meetings is expected to be 40% in accordance with the policy decision which has been mentioned several times. Having this in mind, I will discuss whether women are silent in these decision-making meetings based on the fieldwork data.

With regards to representation, the situation at local level is similar to that at Synod level. As I discovered through conversations, some parishes even reported that they did not represent women. The synod accepted it, even though although it was against the policy decision on women's representation.

I consider first women's representation on Parish Councils. A male interviewee said that, 'the representation of women on our Parish Council is 2 out of a total of 31 parish members (6%) because in many local congregations, where there are nearly always more women than men, the members still do not elect women for the Parish Council' (I, 35, COS7M). Results from the questionnaires at COS6 revealed that women make up only 9% of the Parish Council (out of a total of 35 members there are only 3 women). A woman respondent in another parish also commented that 'the Congregation Council elect more men than women' (COS2CONF). These examples show that women's representation at local level is very small, particularly on the Parish Council. A key reason for women's low representation at local level is that women do not vote for women. This is not surprising. Mbuy-Beya, an African woman theologian urges women to fight for the vote. She says, 'the liberation of woman is in the hands of woman herself and she must fight for it' (1996, 185).

Indeed, it is obvious that there are more women than men at local level and they can elect women rather than men for the parish council at this level, but the values of patriarchy are deep rooted, with women also assuming it is proper for men to rule over women (Eshete, 2000, 18). Thus, in the context of the above argument, a patriarchal system directs even women themselves not to elect women.

In contrast, I observed a Parish Council where women's representation was encouraging. In fact the number of women present on the day of my visit was 7 from a total of 25 Parish Council members (i.e. 35%). A woman who was not satisfied with this representation, because it was less than the constitutional figure, spoke strongly in the meeting about this unconstitutional representation of women (COS3F). The Council received her concerns and advised those congregations which had not brought women members to identify some for the next meeting.

Turning now to consider the Congregational Elders' Committees, data from the interviews indicate that there are only 2 women chairpersons of these committees in more than 5000 congregations (EECMY, 2009, Statistic). However, a woman respondent indicated that 'even though there are women chairpersons in two of our congregations, most of the time they do not participate in the Board meetings of which they are full members' (I, 35, COS2CONF). The responses above are both encouraging and discouraging. They are encouraging in that women have been promoted to the position of chairperson, but discouraging because, although constitutionally the chairpersons ought to be members of the synod Board by virtue of their role, the women chairpersons were not present at the Board.

Their absence from the meetings could be for various reasons which will be considered in chapter 5. Nevertheless, it seems worth commenting on their absence here. Unless these women bring their problems to the attention of the body which elected them, the body cannot address their problems. I attended this meeting, there was less attention on their absence because nobody questioned why they were not there and nothing was said about what would happen in the future if they continued to choose not to come. According to my experience it is usual to say something when full members are absent from the meeting. Ignoring their absence showed discrimination against women's representation.

Furthermore, I argue that the presence of the women would be significant because the Synod Board deals with the implementation of policies and they might contribute a woman's perspective on issues in women's ministry such as theological education, and attendance at Synod Convention, Council and Synod Executive Board. We cannot expect women to be elected to higher decision-making bodies unless they are regularly represented and show their participation by their presence at lower level decision-making bodies such as Synod level and local level.

3.3.6. Inadequate Participation on Decision-making Bodies at Parish and Congregation Level

I visited another two congregations where women's participation was not adequate, particularly in the congregation Elders' Committee meeting. From my observation I noted three issues with regard to women's participation: firstly, the woman member in the committee did not speak a word throughout the meeting. Secondly, since the chair person was her husband, her appearance demonstrated fear even to raise her hands. Thirdly, the chairperson did not even consider her presence as a member. Sometimes he called the men members by name and motivated them to speak. Since their discussions were on planning the yearly budget of the congregation, the discussion was very warm but a woman, who was supposed to be an agent for such a contribution, was not consulted at all. I concluded that women's participation in this particular congregation was inadequate because the chairperson did not even recognise that her participation might contribute to the Church. In addition, the woman herself chose to be silent instead of showing her contribution by bringing out her talents and speaking on women's concerns such as women's participation in strategic managerial positions for which she was there.

This example can raise a number of questions about women's inadequate participation in decision-making meetings. According to the above example, women's silence could be occurring in many ways. This could be physical silence because she feared her husband to move freely, keep her decent and wanted to maintain the dignity of her husband. It could also be psychological silence as she felt fear inside regarding why and what to speak as a result of cultural pressures (see chapter 5). The issue of inadequate participation of women was also noted in the

questionnaires in that 15 out of 18 (83%) at synod office evidenced the silence of women at regional level (Q9DM, COS3F).

In contrast, many women suggested that some congregations welcomed, accepted and seriously considered women's contribution to their meetings. A woman recommended another woman for the Synod Council member whose participation was regular throughout the meeting (I, 35, COS4F). A male elder also said that 'women's contribution on the Elders' Committee is another motivation to support women's participation in elders 'meeting' (I, 35, COS6M). This particular congregation recognised her participation by listening to what she spoke. The Elders' Committee not only recognised her participation but also took her example as awareness raising because her contribution was viewed as motivation for them to add more women to their meeting. Her participation reflected the voice of other women including herself.

As this data shows then, there has been some progress towards women's involvement in decision-making at local level. However, the picture is patchy and women's representation in most congregations is much less than the policy decision of the Church. Indeed, there is considerable variation in the participation of women in different locations. However, in general, women's involvement in decision-making bodies at the local level seems better than at the national and regional levels (c.f. Itefa, 2003, Western Synod annual report 2001). Nevertheless, although women are the majority at grassroots levels, the men's representation is higher than women because women have not been motivated to attend meetings as representatives of women. Women have been given inadequate representation and participation in decision-making meetings and in strategic managerial positions in the holistic ministry of the EECMY. Therefore, they need their own platform to claim equal representation and participation in Church meetings in strategic managerial positions where they can present women's issues such as education, including theological education, since the men are not willing to speak about women's concern such as these. In addition, women's involvement in decision-making bodies at all levels and in most locations is much less than the Church requires, based on the policy decision. Thus, it can be said that the decision-making bodies of the Church as a whole seem to be dominated by men.

Having explored the silence of women in the key decision-making bodies of the EECMY at a range of levels, I now consider the silence of women in evangelism.

3. 4. The Silence of Women in Evangelism

Before discussing the silence of women in evangelistic ministry, it is important to explain briefly how the EECMY defines evangelism. Evangelism in the context of the EECMY means ‘proclamation of the gospel in order to convert people to Christianity’ (Mission Statement, 2001, 2). Evangelism also includes encouraging and nurturing persons beyond conversion towards discipleship and Christian maturity (Mission Statement, 2001, 2, see Ofga’a, 1999, 45). Evangelism is at the heart of the EECMY, demonstrated in the policy and practice of appointing both a pastor and an evangelist to every congregation.

A Department for Mission and Theology has been established at the National Central Office and at Synod levels. This department is the office where the strategic decisions about Evangelism ministry take place. The Synod departments for Mission and Theology (DMT) also work closely with the local level because the latter is the key place where evangelistic ministry takes place (DMT Guidelines on Outreach programme, 2001, 3). All activities, such as discussing the role and status of evangelists (lay) and ordained ministers, are considered at the various Departments for Mission and Theology. In this section I consider women’s involvement in evangelism ministry again at every one of the EECMY’s organizational structures, i.e. at national, regional and local levels. Ultimately, I argue that, although women’s role in evangelistic ministry has been fundamental to the establishment of the EECMY and although they are extremely active in evangelism at grassroots level, their contribution is limited to the point of being largely ignored at the level of both strategic planning and management of resources.

3.4.1. The Silence of Women in the Ministry of Evangelism at Central Office

In this section I will show how women are silenced in the ministry of evangelism, particularly in strategic planning and how their planning initiatives are restricted to developing women’s skills in their traditional roles of evangelist and financial supporter.

Women's involvement as evangelists has never been in doubt, as a male interviewee openly acknowledged, 'Women were among the evangelical pioneers in preaching the gospel and witnessing to Christ to the people from the west, south, north and central' parts of Ethiopia' (I, 35, COS1M). Recognising women's involvement in evangelism from the outset, another male respondent claimed, 'the decisions have been made to enable women to be involved in evangelistic ministry and to exercise their gifts through workshops' (I, 35, COS1M). According to these examples, not only have women been involved in the evangelistic ministry of the Church from its inception but also the Church has been committed to involving women in evangelistic ministry at all levels. Mombo insists that 'the church is sustained by their [women's] unceasing devotion' (2008, 123). Women are committed to evangelistic ministry in various ways such as praying, singing and fundraising. However, as I will show, they have been relegated to the private spheres.

In relation to women's involvement in strategic planning, a woman commented that, 'I attended a workshop on evangelism which make strategic planning for the outreach programme which is based on self-support where women were encouraged to do fundraising. I was the only woman who was on the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to empower the participants to design strategy for the outreach programme. The agenda was how to make finance for staffing, materials for Bible study, Church buildings for each area where the programme would take place' (COS4F). The workshop aimed at the empowerment of both women and men to make strategic plans. Since the agenda was about finance the men suggested women should contribute financing and the men would perform the evangelism using the money provided by the women. In this respect, the workshop did not bring any difference for the women as women remained in their traditional role of fundraising for men.

Gulti argues that the EECMY arranges workshops to empower women in evangelistic ministry since the workshops help them to develop new ideas for the support of evangelism through fundraising (2002, 25). However, such workshops fail completely to empower women for engaging in strategic planning. As we see from the outset, women are largely excluded from the evangelism ministry at the Central

office because there are only two women out of a total of 25 members on the DMT Board. In addition, there is only one woman in the evangelism ministry in the Women's ministry office while there are 7 staff members in the DMT which is far higher than the women's staff at the Central office (EECMY, Office Manual, 2009, 8). In order to make women independent from other departments, the EECMY decided to upgrade women's office to a Department in 2008. However, the decision has not been yet implemented. Thus, women continue to be severely marginalized at the Central Office. In this sense, one of the female interviewees was right when she said, 'although women were pioneers in proclaiming the gospel in the EECMY, according to my experience, there is a silence of women in the ministry of evangelism at the Central Office' (I, 35, COS1F).

Further evidence of the absence of women from the strategic level of working in evangelism at National level comes from both participant observation and from interviews. In the latter, a woman told me that, 'in the Central Office the main actors or agents of evangelism are brothers and fathers. In most cases women are absent in this area of ministry because the organizers are exclusively males' (I, 35, COS1F). Additionally, through participant observation I saw for myself that the eight sections under the DMT are exclusively headed by men. In the different sections of the Department there are twenty male workers and just two women, one of whom works on a computer and the other assists her husband, who is a co-ordinator in one of the sections of the department. Thus women have a mere 9% presence and that is limited to minor administrative roles. It seems then that the pattern of male domination of leadership in evangelism, which permeated EECMY from the 1930s until the 1960s, continues to this day (Wayessa, 1999, 81, c.f. Birri, 1987, 1). Nyengele further argues that the church of Africa fails to include women in the planning of important church events (2004, 250). Not only so, but such patriarchal domination gives all the institutional power to men and deprives women of any power (Dhunfa, 2006, 23; Negassa, 1998, 3). The words of these writers also hold true for the women of the EECMY. In the division of labour women are the supporters and facilitators it would seem and men are the strategic planners. This was also evidenced by a number of women in the interviews. For example, a woman told me that, 'although women contribute their money and energy for the evangelistic outreach they are invisible in the evangelism ministry at National level' (I, 35, COS1F). Women have always been

committed to serving the Church but according to the above evidence their ministry seems limited to menial service rather than involvement in making strategic plans. This means the strategic plans of the EECMY are exclusive to men because women, who are make up of half the membership, are excluded from the evangelism ministry at National level.

Thus, women's visions remain unspoken and the women themselves remain marginalized. I will consider reasons for this in chapter 5. I will now turn to investigate whether the situation of women with respect to women's participation in evangelism ministry is any different at regional level.

3.4.2. The Silence of Women in the Ministry of Evangelism at Synod Level

In this section I demonstrate that at regional level, as at national level, the role of women is again limited to the practical ministries of preaching, evangelism, financial giving and domestic service. Women are excluded from strategic planning, even though Launhardt strongly commends women's ministry in the EECMY. He argues that, in many of the EECMY Synods, women are the backbone of the Church. For example, he refers to women like Aster Wold Mariam who was one of the outstanding preachers and evangelists of her time (2004, 299). He notes that, in the early times, these women were participating in evangelism ministry in various ways. Guta also cites the example of 'Wolete Giorgis [who] contributed money and her home for evangelistic outreach at Bodji' (c.f. Women's Magazine, 2006, 14). She was very generous towards evangelistic ministry to the extent of offering both her home and her money. Nevertheless, such cases and other examples seem forgotten. Indeed, in some respects, it looks as though the full participation of women is even further away now than it was then.

Many male respondents commended these important but subordinate ministries of women such as being good at offering hospitality. One male respondent suggested that, 'women are involved in decorating rooms for the meeting and they know where to put flowers for meetings and workshops' (I, 35, COS4F). Another male interviewee said that on one occasion 'the Synod Executive Board was discussing how to make the evangelistic outreach effective. A woman initiated action by contributing her ring which was pure gold' (I, 35, COS6M). It is clear from these two

examples that at regional level women are thoroughly involved in practical ministry in the department. Of course women also deal with the spiritual ministry such as witnessing and offering prayers for effective evangelistic work. Through this spiritual service women help to build the kingdom of God and fulfil the Great Commission. Even the men acknowledge the significant contribution that the women had made to evangelistic ministry in preaching, hospitality and fundraising. I observed that subsequently, at the same meeting where the woman gave her gold ring, she was invited to offer prayers in which many people were touched and a huge amount of money was contributed. This excellent result came directly out of giving a woman a public voice, albeit in prayer, in which her prayer, together with her example, motivated and challenged men and women in practical ways to make evangelistic outreach effective.

As we have seen above, the man appreciated the women for arranging flowers, which is considered to be subordinate practical ministry, but not their involvement in various kinds of church ministry such as strategic planning and designing strategies for further church ministry. This has traditionally been reserved for men. This patriarchal division of labour serves conveniently to keep women out of strategic planning. Women collude with this when they think it is their 'place' to complete only practical tasks such as making tea/coffee and cooking for different Church meetings at regional level and, therefore, gives theological legitimacy for the relegation of women to the unimportant areas of ministry which the men do not want to share at all.

Additionally, women do not have access to the agendas of committees where strategic planning takes place because the men control the agendas. As one of the interviewees explained, 'the regional level meetings do not include consideration of 'Women in Evangelism' in the agenda items of the Council' (I, 35, COS7F). I also observed the Synod Council meeting where women's agendas were not discussed at all. However, it seems the responsibility of the DMT to include 'Women in Evangelism' as an agenda item in the yearly plan of the Synod, but it is failing in that responsibility with the result that women's work is not discussed and a whole area of strategic planning for women's work is excluded.

The agenda items that women would raise relate to finances for staffing and theological education. For example, I observed that five Synods had conversations with women's ministry co-ordinators of the Synods who had similar problems regarding shortage of budget. As they do not have sufficient budgets they could not give sufficient empowerment to women within the Synods. Particularly, a woman from one Synod said that, 'the yearly budget allocation for my office is only my salary thus I could not conduct any workshop or seminar to empower women' (COS5F). Sometimes she might not get her salary on time because there is no separate fund for her office. Of course, shortage of budget could be the same for other departments such as DMT of the Synod but whether small or big the department has its own budget for running the department as the director is in a strategic position. The woman was simply sitting in her office which is another psychological pain. Shortage of economic means at the Synod level has led women's ministry into dependency.

Again, it seems to be the case that women are excluded from strategic planning with respect to Evangelism at regional level. For example, a woman said that, 'the DMT staff at my Synod are all male (just as at National level). As a result, women do not have direct involvement in this department'. Nyengele observes that the situation is the same in Congo. 'The Synod did not include women's issues in its agenda, even though women were also invited to attend' (2004, 77). It is indeed the case that examples of the exclusion of women from strategic planning roles can be found in many other places, but the extent of the practice does not make it acceptable, rather it strengthens their resolve to address this inequality. Many women commented that women's contributions are not included, such as fundraising and hospitality. A particular woman said that, 'most of the time women's contributions are not considered by the regional evangelism department' (COS4F). Women may have visions to share but their contributions have been ignored and undocumented. Nyengele repeatedly comments that 'even though the issues related to their place in the church, this was not reflected in the minutes of that synod' (2004, 77). This is true for many of the EECMY synods because women's cases are not documented. The implication then is that women are not considered to be instrumental to the ministry of evangelism besides at a financial and facilitative level.

According to the EECMY Mission Statement, the role of DMT at Synod level is to arrange seminars and workshops in order to equip pastors and evangelists (men and women) for effective evangelistic ministry (Mission Statement, 2001, 5; c.f. Alemu, 2006, 11). Therefore, training for proclamation of the gospel is a key activity at regional level and it links closely with the local levels where the evangelistic outreach is initiated. However, women do not benefit from the department because the seminars and workshops arranged by the department to equip evangelists do not include women within the training arrangements. A woman respondent pointed out that, ‘although women’s ministry at the regional level gives short term training for women, since the women’s office have severe budget constraints women cannot be equipped for effective ministry’ (I,35,COS5F). I witnessed a powerful example of the nature and effect of such exclusion when I visited a workshop prepared for pastors and evangelists where a total of 57 participants were gathered. In this workshop, there was only 1 woman evangelist.

This workshop was arranged in Addis Ababa for the four Synods. I was very surprised to observe such a gap between the number of men and women. Finally, I discovered two main reasons for women’s absence: firstly, out of the four Synods, only one Synod chose a woman to attend. Secondly, although many women were invited to attend the workshop, the budget was prepared for only 60 participants of which women’s quota was only 3. Even so, only 1 woman actually attended. 56 males joined the workshop which meant that just 1 man was absent. Since the women’s quota was already very small, women’s representation was minute at 2%. Such a huge difference between men and women could happen because the funding for the workshop was effectively limited to the men. The exclusion of women from workshops happens in the following way:

The parishes which receive invitations do not allocate places equally to men and women. Then, from those who are allocated a place, funding is habitually targeted at men rather than at women. Finally, as we shall see in chapter five, women’s other duties prevent them from attending training. Thus, Niguse contends that one of the problems of women not being visible in workshops is their prohibition from attending. She pointed out that participating in workshops has been for a long time a

place of male domination, and that it has been difficult to break this kind of custom (1991, 8).

Additionally, I observed for myself that there were no women in the Department for Mission and Theology at regional level except in the separate Women in Evangelism section. This might well account for the omission of women's agenda from the Council because, as there were no women in the Department, there was no-one who would raise women's concerns for discussion.

Yet, in the Women and Evangelism section, women can and do present their own agendas and discuss issues in depth with Women's Boards. They may choose to report them to the Synod Council for discussion. If the section was upgraded to a Department it could make its own strategic plan independently, but in the present arrangements the section cannot carry out effective work for developing women's participation in evangelism ministry at Synod level.

During Synod Councils, some women theologians told me of the experiences of women in being overlooked when applying for leadership roles in the Synods, including the DMT. For example, in one of my locations a woman theologian was serving in social work rather than in the evangelism department. In the same Synod one woman commented,

I am a first Degree holder in theology and have more than 10 years of experience as an evangelist. Since there was a vacancy at the Department for Mission and Theology in my Synod, I competed for this position. Yet, a man who had less experience than me was elected to the position (I, 35, COS5F).

Another female interviewee commented, 'In my Synod there was an election for an executive managerial position. A woman competed with two men for that position but one of the men won the election' (I, 35, COS5F). In both situations the women were left from the election and only the men were elected. This shows that the policy decision of the EECMY on women's inclusion in managerial positions has been forgotten since the men are continually nominated and elected but no women. This shows that these synods do not want to consider women's inclusion in such positions.

Given this evidence, it can be suggested that women are not promoted either to lead the Department for Mission and Theology or to other senior roles simply because they are women. It seems that leadership positions in evangelism are reserved exclusively for men. In this manner the church subscribes to the traditional sexist attitude towards women which denies women's participation in the public realm. Storkey identifies this patriarchal attitude when she says 'Women's role, even within the church, is primarily that of wife and mother, and many church people feel very uneasy when a woman moves out of that role into another' (1995, 47, c.f. Genene, 2005, 2). This comment, although voiced by an English woman, applies exactly to the Ethiopian culture where women are obliged to take the domestic rather than the public role (Hurisa 2006, 7; Kasahun, 2006, 21). (This will be further considered in Chapter five). I would comment that it is, therefore, unsurprising that women's involvement in evangelistic ministry tends to be mainly within hospitality and domesticity (see Oduyoye, 2001, 99). In practice, when women deal with hospitality, they also do more evangelistic work. In my area women say 'Noraa' (Oromo) and 'Yigbu' (Amharic) to guests. The term is part of social morality and means 'welcome'. It means that whoever enters into the house should have every hospitality because women believe that everything that they have and give comes from God. Women use the role of hospitality strategically to do the work of evangelism rather than remaining in their traditional roles. This demonstrates that women can already plan and act strategically and show initiative in recognising and seizing opportunities to evangelise. This behaviour challenges the perception that women cannot fulfil strategic roles as they are already implementing effective strategies for evangelism.

As the fieldwork revealed, women play an active role in evangelistic ministry. However, it seems that, although the individual charisma of evangelist and other ministries in the area of finance, hospitality and prayer are recognised and even celebrated, recognition leading to training and involvement in strategic thinking and decision-making is still very largely denied to women at regional level because the men do not want to share power with women even though many men recognise women's ability they do not want to change the structures of evangelism within the EECMY which cater for men and serve a patriarchal agenda. Let us see then whether the same is true at parish and congregational levels.

3.4.3. The Silence of Women in Evangelism at Parish and Congregational level

The local level is fundamental for the practical ministry of evangelism, and women are key to its participation outworking (*Women's Guide*, 2001, 43). In this section I will explore their participation in order to identify whether or not they are silenced at local levels.

A range of data from the fieldwork shows that women give very significant support to local evangelism. For example, a female interviewee told me that, 'women at the local level are the main participants in evangelistic ministry' (I,35, COS2FCON). In contrast the questionnaires from male respondents at congregational level showed that women's participation in evangelism ministry at congregation level was far less and was supported by 59 out of a total of 83 respondents (71%) (Q2 EV, CONM). Once again, these women contribute money, time and prayers for such work but they are denied opportunity to participate in strategic planning. For example, they earn money to give to the evangelistic work through their craft work (basket work, weaving and spinning, embroidery, beads and such like) and they also offer their homes for evangelism (Aren, 1976, 218, see *Women's Guide*, 2001, 63-67). Dhunfa contrasts this with the work of women pioneers already mentioned like Aster Wald Mariam (2006, 25, Kasahun, 2006, 2). According to Dunfa, she was one of the outstanding women preachers before the establishment of the EECMY. At present time in many congregations women have direct access to preaching and teaching ministries, although some congregations are still reluctant to allow women to regularly preach and teach. Evangelistic ministry at national and regional levels have some differences from that at local level because at national and regional levels evangelistic ministry mainly deals with management and planning the whole work of evangelism. Conversely, the main job at local level is preaching and teaching, as well as nurturing (*Women's Ministry Guide*, 2001, 67). It seems then that, regional, national and local levels have in common the feature that women are not often the ones doing the evangelism itself, but they carry out only preaching and teaching wherever they are allowed to do so. Nevertheless, they are the ones evangelising through their hospitality and through the performance of their traditional gender roles.

Such work in the present is evidenced in the following story told by a woman respondent

I went to a very remote area where there were no Christians. I stayed with my relatives who were not Christian either. One day we had coffee with neighbours. I began to witness Christ to these new people. 15 people received Christ at once. Now there are more than 10 established congregations (I, 35, COS2CONF).

Evidence of similar activity is supported by many male and female respondents. For example, a man said ‘women have been active evangelists similar to their male counterparts. Women contribute their time and money to the evangelistic ministry’ (I, 35, COS7COM). The EECMY has been helped by women’s creative evangelistic contributions as they serve both body and soul (by providing hospitality and by preaching the Word of God). They also encourage those newly converted Christians to build their own churches as we have seen above.

Aren cites a case where a woman was actually supported by her husband in pursuing her call to evangelise. ‘God had sent her [a woman] to Bodji to evangelise, this was her primary obligation’ (1987, 408, Haile, 2005, 5). Although she was busy in the home she recognised that her primary call was to evangelism. The husband of this woman also recognised her call and shared the domestic work while she was busy preaching the gospel (Aren, 1978, 408-9). The point of this story is that it is a rarity. Women are usually expected to work harder than men, caring for family, animals, subsistence crops and basic economic production, as well as their service in the church. All this usually takes place in a context of little recognition or explicit valuing (see, Chapter 5)

The example of a woman interviewee cited below presents the more typical picture of women’s invisibility and lack of recognition in evangelistic work:

My congregation celebrated a 50 year anniversary of church planting at grassroots level. Even though it was a big occasion, women were not invited even to give a reading but the men presented a self-congratulatory memorial speech by themselves explaining that they [the men] planted the church 50 years ago’ (I, 35, COS7CONF).

Another respondent said, ‘women have contributed to the evangelistic ministry through prayers, fundraising, and hospitality, yet their contributions have not been considered’ (I, 35, COS6CONF). Both respondents indicated that women’s contribution is hidden, ignored and unvalued, as witnessed by the fact that they were not remembered in the 50 year anniversary of Church planting. The males constructed Church history only from their own perspectives. The historical background to the 50th year was prepared by men and they took the credit for themselves.

Although women were fully included in building the Church with their male counterparts they did not get credit for what they had contributed. They were excluded from the history since history has attachment with maleness and even the history for this day was constructed by the men. Oduyoye notes that, ‘very often women work in the church and men take credit for the outcome’ (2001, 82). Since women were not included in the organizing committee for the anniversary celebration, their contributions were ignored. Indeed, the situation was even worse because the women’s contribution was credited to the men and the women were silenced by being written out of the story.

The evidence then suggests that, despite their significant contributions to evangelistic ministry, women are almost entirely forgotten and ignored at the local level when the context involves issues of power and status. This is particularly distressing when women have proved themselves to be the best friends of the Church through their many committed acts of holistic service. The preparation for the celebration was one of a strategic plan from which women were excluded. We have also seen that what is true at local level with respect to power and status has a much deeper and more serious impact in its effects at regional and national level, effectively removing women from any strategic work with respect to evangelism.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the silence of women in two areas of ministry: decision-making and evangelism. We have seen how women are silenced in decision-making meetings through various ways. By being ridiculed, or ignored when they speak, and by being refused permission to speak. Sometimes women themselves choose not to speak, which could be due to lack of self-esteem and internalising what is said about them. Women appear to be blamed not for what they are. Women are excluded not only from decision-making meetings but also from the important strategic managerial positions in both evangelism and the top decision-making bodies.

Through a patriarchal system systematic assumptions ensure that women are marginalized and cannot fulfil representative roles in Church life as they should. They

are significantly under-represented in decision-making meetings and in policy-making in evangelism at National level in General Assemblies, Council and Executive Board. Further, they are severely under-represented in the managerial DMT at national level since almost all the staff in the DMT are men. This clearly shows women's exclusion from strategic planning and from policy-making in evangelism, since both of these areas come under the management of the DMT.

I have tried to examine how women are silenced at Synod level and have discovered that women are in a similar situation as they are also under-represented in this level of decision-making meetings. The implication of women's under-representation in turn affects their participation. As a result, they cannot bring their agendas for further discussion or planning.

My findings from the local level show that, although women were pioneers in the early days of the EECMY, their contributions have been hidden and untold, whereas the men's history has been spoken through the men who prepared the agenda and the speech in the example of the 50th anniversary church building celebration. This shows how women's history has been erased from Church history on the basis of their gender and gives the impression that women have not and do not participate in strategic of Church life. Women are also not involved in evangelism at local level except through menial and practical services such as cooking and serving the Church meetings. Although I have given a summary of this chapter, I will continue to explore the silence of women in lay leadership and ordination ministry within the holistic ministry of the EECMY in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

The Silence of Women in Lay Leadership and Ordination

4.1. Introduction

As in chapter 3, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate from data gathered from the fieldwork *how* women are silenced within the holistic ministry of the EECMY. In this chapter I will focus on the two remaining themes which were selected for attention, namely, lay leadership and ordination. I begin by discussing the silence of women in lay leadership and demonstrate those means by which women have been silenced in this ministry. I should clarify that by lay leadership I mean lay liturgical leadership, referring to those who preach and lead worship in their local churches, and, as a result, are elders at congregational level. I follow this with a discussion of women's silence in ordained ministry where I consider the ways in which women have been systematically marginalized. Having discussed these, I conclude the section by drawing together my findings from the chapter. I follow this by drawing out key observations from chapters 3 & 4 about the silence of women in the four focus areas of ministry.

There is of course an overlap between the ministries of lay leadership and ordination in that both lay leaders and ordained ministers preach and teach, but the two can be differentiated in as much as ordained ministers have a sacramental ministry with respect to Holy Communion and Baptism (Bakke, 1987, 189). As I discovered from my data, there is another significant difference between the two ministries in that ordination is an important criterion for gaining many leadership positions at National and synod levels in the EECMY. For example, a woman told me that, 'in the EECMY, ordination is required for posts such as General Secretary, President, and Director of the Department for Mission and Theology at both national and synod levels. At parish level, it is required for the role of Parish leader' (COS3CONF). The role of ordained minister, therefore, carries greater authority and status than that of lay liturgical leader and provides more possibilities for promotion within the Church. The key point is that ordination is a prerequisite for the top managerial positions within the EECMY. The importance of the criterion and the ways in which it can be abused are well illustrated by a story that I was told during my research. A man told me that some senior male members of the EECMY had decided that one of the senior posts described should be given to a particular man. However, they discovered that he

was not ordained and therefore he could not compete for the post. Undeterred, they approached one congregation who did not recognise his call. Nevertheless, he found another nearby congregation and received a call for his ordination. He competed for the post and won the election. The story raises questions both about the authenticity of the man's call and also about the male power that can ignore agreed policies. More than that, the case contrasts sharply with those of many women who have received a call to ordination from their congregations but these have either been rejected or at least not yet accepted by their synods, or they have been refused funding for their theological education and training and cannot therefore, proceed.

This example demonstrates the patriarchal background to the silence of women in ordained ministry. However, in this chapter I will first investigate the silence of women in their role in leadership before considering women's silence in ordained ministry because lay leadership is practised before being called to the ministry of ordination. Indeed, there is a separate liturgy for lay leaders which is different from the liturgy led by an ordained person (Book of Liturgy 2001, 36). Furthermore, the silence of women in ordained ministry is considered last because the ordination of women is a new phenomenon which has only been experienced in the church since 2000 (EECMY Western Synod, annual report, 2000). Since then, women as well as men can be called to this ministry of Word and Sacraments. Yet, as I shall argue and demonstrate, women are still silenced in both lay leadership and ordination in a variety of ways within the holistic ministry of the EECMY.

4. 2. The Silence of Women in Lay Leadership

Traditionally, the leadership ministry of the Church focuses on liturgical leadership which encompasses reading, singing, teaching and preaching (Mission Statement 2001, 13). The congregation is involved in worship through songs, prayers and responses. Customarily, the choir offers songs twice during the worship service (Book of Liturgy 1996, 7-21). As the EECMY has always practised the priesthood of all believers (based on its Lutheran foundation), both lay and ordained people are legitimately involved in this Church leadership. In many synods lay women are currently involved only in conducting prayers, readings and singing, but lay men usually participate in all areas of lay leadership (Ofga'a, 1999, 54, Haile, 2006, 23). This section, therefore, demonstrates that the involvement of women in the liturgical leadership of the Church is limited and

needs further development. It is the same experience that Itefa notes about the EECMY when she argues that women are effectively excluded from lay liturgical leadership (2003, 1).

4.2.1. The Silence of Women in Lay Leadership at National Level

I focus my discussion here on the worship programmes held at both the General Assembly and the Council meetings. I also include at this level the issue of theological training because it was one of the most serious barriers to becoming a lay leader raised by women in the fieldwork. I begin by considering women's involvement in the worship programmes.

A number of male respondents to the interviews and questionnaires suggested that recognition is given to women in lay leadership at National level. For example, a man (a pastor) with whom I held a conversation said 'the EECMY has encouraged both men and women to be equally involved in all ministry areas including the liturgical worship services at all levels' (I, 35,COS1M). This comment suggests that the Church has made efforts to promote women's ministerial development in liturgical worship. However, the words of a woman interviewee add a highly significant qualification to such involvement.

Occasionally, women preach and also lead prayers at morning devotions of the Central Office staff, but I have never seen them doing the same in the big Church meetings. For example, they are not given opportunities to preach and be fully involved in liturgical leadership in worship preceding executive meetings of the EECMY. Such leadership is given to men (I, 35, COS1F).

According to this view, women are allowed to both preach and to lead prayers at devotional services in front of a very small group of staff, but are not permitted to be involved in the liturgical ministry (for example preaching and teaching) attached to the General Assembly and Council meetings where many members from the grassroots are assembled and where a public platform is given to preaching. Indeed, as I myself observed, the participation of women in leadership ministry relating to the meetings of the General Assembly and Council is limited to those more private areas carrying less status. The effect is that women's gifts of ministry are hidden and there is no attempt to give them opportunities to be in the public eye.

The key point here is that women are not permitted to be involved in this highly public liturgical ministry attached to the General Assembly and Council meetings with up to 500 attendees, many of whom are from the grassroots parishes and congregations. Instead, women are relegated to the private, lower status worship services, are ‘occasionally’ allowed both to preach and to lead prayers at devotional services, involving a very small group of the staff. One possible reason for their exclusion from liturgical lay leadership in such big meetings might be one of trying to prevent women from having a public platform and showcasing their ministerial capabilities. Another reason could be simply related to the patriarchal culture which confines women to the private and insignificant sphere. It seems that men do not want women to exercise such roles, possibly because if they do, it will reduce men’s opportunities to demonstrate their preaching gifts. Fikru, from the Ethiopia evangelical church Kale Heywet, argues that all such liturgical leadership involving preaching and teaching is controlled by men even though there are many gifted women who are called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry of lay liturgical leadership (2006, 22). According to Fikru, men have and use the power to deny women’s participation in leadership and to marginalize them within the church.

Another woman respondent identified a further way in which men silence women liturgical leaders in this context which is by limiting their highly public ministry to what is perceived as the subsidiary ministry of leading songs and prayers. She said,

Women were assigned to lead just songs and prayers in the General Assembly and then only twice in the whole week’s worship programme. The remaining parts of the worship such as preaching, teaching and leading liturgy are always reserved for the men (I, 35, COS1F).

This response illustrates the same two ways in which women are significantly silenced in the large General Assembly which gathers members from all over the country. Firstly, the main parts of the worship and liturgy (i.e. preaching and teaching) were exclusively performed by male leaders, leaving women to lead the prayer and songs. Secondly women’s involvement in leading these aspects of worship were again limited to just two mornings out of eight days of meetings. The remaining six days were led entirely by the male leaders. This reflects what usually happens when the Assembly gathers for a week.

It seems then that women are regularly deliberately and strategically prevented from preaching and teaching in the national context and from participating in liturgical leadership ministry at this level. The significance of this division of labour is that the men always do the public ministry and women are always relegated to leading worship in the small group and to serving tea or coffee. In this sidelining of women, Mathewos recognises that 'patterns of subordination and discrimination exist in the church which is why leadership has become a men's club' (2006, 13). Emana from Ethiopia agrees that women are rarely given the opportunity of public spiritual leadership (2006, 6).

In contrast to this perception, one male respondent was able to recognise the impact that women would be able to make should they be given the opportunity to preach in big meetings at national level. He said,

If women are allowed to preach and also lead the liturgy in big meetings like Church Council and General Assembly at national level, this by itself will encourage the Synods and congregations to extend women's ministry in leading liturgical services in their respective areas. But most of the time they are excluded from such opportunities (I, 35, COS1M).

Allowing women to lead liturgy in large meetings would indeed be a practical implementation of the policy decisions requiring women's participation and it might further persuade all levels of the church to involve women in leading liturgy. It could also be a good lesson for the whole church, in general, and especially for those synods and parishes and congregations which have far less enthusiasm for the leadership ministry of women. However, the above discussion of the current situation indicates that, by refusing women a public platform for their gifts of preaching and leading in big meetings at national level, their contribution is only ever in leading songs and prayers.

It is not that this is not an important ministry, the point is that as this is shared with men so should the teaching and preaching also be shared. It is hardly encouraging to know that such attitudes are common in other African countries and beyond (Sadi, 2006, 12, see Ashena, 2004, 6). It could be the case that men have recognised that women liturgical leaders threaten their role and their power and for this reason they are relegated to minister in those places where they can have little if any influence (Sadi, 2006, 12, see Ashena, 2004, 6). Such limiting of women is all the more serious at national level because, as one of a female respondents remarked, 'to be a good

example the EECMY Central Office needs to open more doors for qualified and called women to lead the worship service in big meetings fully according to the policy decisions of the Church' (I, 35, COS1F). This could mean the exclusion of women from leading lay liturgical at big meetings was not a lack of qualified women for leadership but the national level did not give such place for women in order to be public leaders.

The interviewee is referring to the EECMY policy decision which says that women should be involved in every area of ministry (14th General Assembly, 1993). She is arguing that the Central Office has the responsibility to ensure that this policy is being implemented especially in central locations where it has direct control. The national level might be expected to make use of the opportunity that the big meetings at national level bring to allow women to exercise their leadership. In addition, this body should then encourage women to be fully involved in preaching and teaching as well as in leading prayers and songs at the national meetings.

Such progressive action may effect further development in women's leadership ministry. For instance, when women preach in public and their gifts are demonstrated, the result might be that they could be suggested for further Church ministry. For example, on one exceptional occasion, a woman was preaching at one of the Church Councils. Her preaching was so powerful that many people were touched by it. After some time, I was informed that her ministry and potential were recognised because, having heard her powerful talent for preaching, one of the guests from abroad invited her to join an exchange programme. This was a direct result of publicising this women's ministry. This is highly significant in that it took someone from abroad to recognise the woman's potential rather than her own (male) leaders. It was after this that she travelled to the USA for three weeks to share her experience of ministry in the EECMY. Thus, women's talents and gifts need not be hidden and private (see Fiorenza, 1993, 16, Getachew, 2003 5, Rebera, 1994, 109). I also observed a Church Executive Board where women were totally excluded from leading liturgical lay leadership. Although a more public profile for women may lead to positive change such as more women being suggested for leadership ministry, it may be that change like this is a very reason for denying women a more public role in the EECMY. If women are afforded more opportunities in preaching and teaching,

this would give women more space in the ministry of the Church, and if women have more space, men will have less space in the church lay liturgical leadership.

The problem I found, therefore, from the fieldwork was that the policy decision on the participation of women in leadership ministry was being implemented in only a very limited way at national level. Indeed, my respondents expressed strong criticism of the national level for its neglect of women's participation in lay leadership. For example, women respondents in interview said that, 'women only participate on morning devotion for the staff not at the General Assembly' (COS1F). Another reason why women are excluded from leadership ministry at General Assembly, Council and some other meetings, such as workshops, is that the organization and choice of speakers is also controlled by men where women are again excluded.

We move on now to investigate whether women's leadership at the regional level is silenced, and if so, whether it is in the same, or in a different way.

4.2.2. The Silence of Women in Lay Leadership ministry at Regional Level

There are a number of ways in which women and men participate in leadership ministry at regional level. First, there is regular morning devotion for all the staff who work at the Synod. Then, there are also a number of public meetings, such as Synod Convention and Synod Council. The Executive Board has a smaller membership and there are a variety of workshops held at the regional level. All of these committees or groups have a separate devotional programme. The morning devotion for staff is led by a member of the staff and other less public ministries are treated in the same way. However, as at national level, the Convention and Council hold a week of morning and evening services of public worship. As in my analysis of the silence of women in leadership ministry at a national level, I will focus on the more public liturgical services held at the meetings of the two executive bodies, the Synod Convention and the Council, together with some initial reference to the morning devotions referred to above.

It is encouraging that both male and female staff members participate equally in preaching at and leading liturgical worship in the morning devotional programmes for staff at the regional level. A male interviewee confirmed that, 'both men and

women are involved in the morning devotion. Preaching and teaching is regularly conducted by men and women' (I, 35, COS2M) (pastor). Further, a woman interviewee recognised that this daily worship provides an important opportunity for women to exercise liturgical leadership: 'the morning devotion at regional level is where the women staff also exercise their gifts of liturgical leadership such as leading of songs, liturgies, and particularly in preaching and teaching' (I, 35, COS3F).

The above male pastor interviewee agreed with this, although, perhaps significantly, he focussed on women's leading of songs and prayers, and omitted any reference to their preaching and teaching. It seems that he may have been less accepting of women preaching a sermon, or of women in a position of authority over men in their preaching role. Nevertheless, it is clear from the interviewees that the morning devotion provides a significant opportunity for equality to flourish because both men and women share their talents of leadership in this place. In this setting, the EECMY practises an egalitarian leadership.

In contrast, let me quote from a woman describing the situation at the large annual public meetings of the executive bodies: 'although women are allowed to conduct liturgical leadership of the morning devotion, they are not invited to lead worship at the Synod Convention and Council meetings at regional level' (I, 35, COS2F). Another woman expressed a similar concern, citing Church anniversary celebrations as another example of a large and important occasion. 'Although men and women are equally called to leadership ministry, it is only ever the men who are chosen to lead songs and prayers on occasions such as Church anniversary celebrations' (COS3F).

In the comments above we can see that, although women are allowed to lead at the morning devotion without any distinction, when it comes to an important occasion the leadership is immediately shifted to the male leaders. The people responsible for allocating leadership for these occasions are the programme officers or co-ordinators who are always men, and who only ever suggest men to lead the liturgy on these large occasions. The choice of personnel to lead the activities and the schedules for both the morning devotions and the more public spiritual programmes rests with the

Director of the Department for Mission and Theology (DMT), who is a man (Revised Constitution, 2005, 47-8, Article 22, 5 & 8).

During the Convention and Council women are consistently relegated to their traditional roles of performing domestic chores and providing menial services such as making and serving coffee and meals, and preparing accommodation. I observed a Synod Council where a woman with leadership roles at synod level, who was also treasurer of the Synod, was engaged with serving on the food committee and organizing and providing accommodation. Even a woman such as this, with a responsible professional role in the synod, was not encouraged to participate in leadership. This attitude is identified by Zelelew when, in a more general context, she criticises the selfishness of Ethiopian men who like to consider themselves as the only ones gifted to lead (Zelelew, 2005, 11, see Ashena, 2004, 6).

I observed two morning devotions at Synod level where women preached and offered spiritual songs alongside men. In this way, men and women shared together. In the same synod I attend a synod council meeting where different men led the lay liturgical leadership but those women who were leading the morning devotions for the staff did not participate in the Executive Board. I concluded that there was exclusion for women at regional level.

Women's liturgical leadership role is tenuous when it can be so easily withdrawn in a particular circumstance and their role returned to the traditional one of domestic service rather than being encouraged to practise their gifts at large meetings without withdrawing from performing the ministry of hospitality. A woman confirmed this when she said, 'women are asked to perform domestic duties during the Synod Assembly and Council meeting' (I, 35, COS5F). The experience of Ethiopian women in this case is similar to the experience of women in the early church according to Fiorenza. She argues that the post-Pauline biblical literature suggests a steady loss of the egalitarian vision of leadership shared between women and men, replaced with a reversion to oppressive, patriarchal, hierarchical structures, which not only led to the exclusion of women leaders in the early church 'but also segregated and restricted them to women's spheres' (Fiorenza, 1993, 309-10, c.f. Dibisa, 2000; Ashena, 2004,

5). The same is true for the EECMY in that women are relegated to traditional subordinate roles in the private sphere (Zezelew, 2005, 10, Mengistu, 1998, 30).

Women, it seems, are allowed to share their talents of leadership when the meeting is small and unimportant, but at important events women are relegated to providing domestic services. By important I mean, different big Church meetings at regional level. For example, the Synod Convention and Council meetings are more public and formal with more people from the catchment areas of the respective synod, honoured guests from the Central Office and also missionaries from abroad. Such gatherings are a showcase, but women are to remain hidden, silent, and without opportunity. To write in this way is not to deny the importance of the small devotional meetings, it is rather to claim that just as women share in leading the private devotions, they should in the same way share in the leading of the public worship. Men, however, seem to be claiming that this is they only who should remain in the public sphere at the expense of women.

Since these large-scale public events are controlled and led by men, women's roles seem to be relegated to domesticity by returning to the traditional division of labour whereby men lead the public spheres and women hold the private spheres, such as preparing coffee and tea, food and lodging. A male respondent in interview told me that, 'women are always serving in the kitchen while we are running meetings. Thus, they lack experiences of leading liturgical leadership' (COS1M) (pastor). As women hold the domestic services rather than public leadership, they are excluded from the events that are significant, featuring high profile figures from the EECMY. This confirms women's marginalization in lay leadership ministry within the EECMY at regional level. The invisibility of women in lay liturgical leadership was also supported by women respondents to the questionnaires at synod level by 15 out of 18 women (83%). This shows there is huge exclusion of women in lay liturgical leadership at regional level.

The depth and extent of this suppression of women's liturgical leadership is seen most clearly when the meetings, such as the Council or Convention, cover a period of time, as long as a week. The effect at synod level is similar to that at the National level. For example, I observed a Council meeting where I noticed that during the

seven days in which the Council met, although two women were invited to lead two morning songs for the Council, the rest of the days' spiritual activities, for example, Bible studies and liturgical leadership, were directed entirely by men. Conversely, at every coffee break seven women served coffee outside the meeting. Thus in seven days of meetings seven times seven women (forty-nine) were occupied in serving coffee and tea not to mention those in the kitchen preparing lunch and dinner. This example is as typical at regional level as it is at national level. Women are not allowed to demonstrate or share their gifts of liturgical leadership in the context of a big meeting where their gifts and ministries might be publicised. The significance and purpose of putting women's gifts on show is that the ministry of these women might become known so that they gain recognition and would be invited to other places and become known as public speakers. To hide women's gifts by excluding them from leadership in this prevents them from demonstrating their potential and their gifts for leadership.

Fikru argues for the same vision in that 'women's gifts of preaching and teaching should be seen at all Church events since they are called by God and the church community' (2006, 23). Women claim full participation in the ministry of lay leadership. Although she speaks from the experience of women in the Kalehywet Church, it applies to the EECMY. What is happening, however, is a continuation of exclusion from the public, high status context and relegation to being a subordinate menial provider.

I have demonstrated the limitations imposed on women at synod level in order to restrict their liturgical leadership to small private daily devotions in contrast to public high profile liturgical leadership roles which are given to men because of the patriarchal tradition of public and private spheres, of men speaking and women remaining silent, of men controlling and women acquiescing. Concluding, that in this area of ministry at this level, women's voices are again muted, let us investigate the participation of women in leadership at local level to see whether their situation is any different.

4.2.3. The Silence of Women in lay Leadership at Parish and Congregational level

As women rather than men make up the majority of the church congregations at local level, it is important to examine how they participate in leadership ministry. The aim of this section is to show that, even in a situation where they are the majority, their participation as leaders in Sunday worship services is severely limited. In principle, both men and women who have received a theological education and have been accepted by the congregation as lay leaders can be involved in the preaching ministry of the church at local level. However, it seems that, although indigenous women evangelists such as Salban, Feben and Lidia were involved in leadership at the beginning of the 20th century by preaching and teaching (Wayessa, 1999, 80, see Aren, 1978, 295, Guta, 2001, 65), gradually the experiences of women in leadership have decreased while men's activities in leadership have grown significantly.

As data from the fieldwork shows, there are several ways to silence women. One woman, a lay evangelist, who because of this office was automatically a lay liturgical leader, said 'in my congregation women [evangelists and other chosen women] are allowed to participate in preaching and teaching but they are not regularly involved in leading the liturgy of the Sunday worship' (I, 35, COS5CONF). She means by this that although she as a recognised evangelist can preach and teach on some occasions, she is not permitted by the elders (who are mainly men) to lead the liturgical service written by the EECMY for the lay leaders to use even though the office of evangelist means that she is eligible to do this. In support of this finding, the questionnaires showed 26 women out of a total of 31 (84%) at congregation level (Q1 LL, CONF) agreed women are restricted in this way.

The questionnaires also revealed the majority of males recognise this situation. That is to allow women's public leadership 54 males out of 83 at congregation level (65%) (Q1. Leadership CONM). This refusal happens because it is the congregation pastor and/or elders (usually men) who draw up the Sunday preaching rota every three months and they choose not to include women. In many congregations, therefore, eligible women do not appear on the published monthly preaching lists for Sunday worship, yet, as one woman indicated, women are the backbone of the local churches. A woman commented that, 'women have not been given the opportunity to

lead the liturgy, but they always come to the Church, to watch or listen to what the males say and then return home' (COS2FCON). Another woman expressed a similar view when she said, 'we no longer expect anything other than only men to lead the liturgy every Sunday while we simply observe like a game of football' (I, 35, COS7FCON). These women did not want to leave the liturgical leadership to the men. Instead they wanted women to participate and not to be passive in this ministry. The first woman's comment is echoed by Storkey: 'men preach, women listen, men pray, women say 'Amen' (1995, 47). Yet, the woman did not happily accept such norms in the Church. However, two of the respondents quoted earlier seem to indicate that this example of continuing patriarchal marginalization of women has led them to become resigned to the practice. Their expectation to hear a woman exercise liturgical leadership has been disappointed by the continuing patriarchal practice. Given men's patriarchal agenda, it was generous of one woman to speak of sharing leadership with men. She said, 'we need inclusive leadership because both men and women are called to serve the community of the Church who called us' (COS3CONF).

The fieldwork data already indicates that women have a strong desire to share their calling and gifts of leadership in worship at Sunday services. In order to do this, they need to be listed on monthly preaching programmes like their male counterparts because they have the necessary gifts and training to preach, teach and pray. Birii contends that women are even more dedicated than men, although they have not been remembered as leaders (1986, 2). As we have learned, the women in the community know the gifts of women (preaching, singing and praying as well hospitality), and some of them believe that they are also called like men without any distinction (Gal. 3: 28).

Although women's lay leadership, including preaching and teaching, is an accepted policy of the Church, there is still considerable vocalised opposition from men at local level. For example, one of the male interviewees said that, in his experience, 'women can lead prayer or choirs but liturgical leadership at the altar and preaching from the pulpit should be conducted only by males' (I, 35, COS7MP). The interviewee meant two things by this. First, it is a generally held view in the Church that the altar and the pulpit are both very public places where the leader is highly

visible. Secondly, both places are recognised to be holy places and there is a longstanding issue, fed by cultural and Old Testament traditions about menstruation, childbirth and women's purity, that some men would never want a woman to stand in the pulpit or at the altar. Another man agreed, arguing that, 'the congregation is happier to hear songs from the women but not the liturgical leadership because even missionaries' wives did not conduct liturgy' (I, 35, COS2MP). It is interesting that the latter comment refers back to the wives of the early missionaries as a role model for how things should still be done in the church, rather than looking forward to a changing church (Mombo, 2008, 125, Birri, 2010, 8).

Women do continue to be involved in a limited way in preaching and teaching, yet, issues of patriarchal power remain and can present literal, physical barriers to preaching. For example, sometimes women are permitted to preach, but as one of my interviewees explained, 'women are not allowed to preach from the pulpit in town congregations' (I, 35, COS6CONF). The woman was drawing attention to the fact that town congregations are often more unwilling than the rural congregations to accept the preaching and leading of women. Another woman told me of the following incident,

I was invited to preach at a congregational conference. As I began my preaching a young man put a piece of paper in the pulpit in front of me. While I was preaching to the congregation I picked up the note and read 'you woman, this is not your place to stand.' In addition it says 'preaching is not your job it is a man who should preach' (I, 35, COS3CONF).

This quotation indicates not only the strength of the opposition of some men to women's leadership, but also the freedom of men of any age and position, that is, without an authoritative role in the congregation, to oppose the ministry of women. It is, therefore, the case that, although in theory preaching from the pulpit is inclusive, some men want to reserve the pulpit exclusively for men. Although the pulpit has traditionally been reserved for men, women claim to preach from the pulpit because they are also called to serve the church by being at the front of the congregation in the recognised place of authority. Another reason then for men not allowing women to preach from the pulpit could be that this place symbolises authority. It seems clear that at least some of the opposition to women's leadership is bound up with whether a woman can claim and exercise authority when men are present. This example shows the resistance to women's lay leadership of a male dominated patriarchal

model of leadership (Nagassa, 1998, 6). It seems that, although women like men are called by God to teach and preach, they are prevented from practising their gifts of preaching by male leaders. If the pulpit is a place where the gospel of truth is preached, it seems unjust to prevent women from this particular place.

In contrast, one of the male ordained pastors has claimed that the EECMY has accepted women's involvement in leadership, particularly their conducting of 'congregational leadership' (COS4M). However, another male respondent qualifies this statement almost immediately, acknowledging that in some geographical areas 'most of the time women lead women's confirmation classes and Sunday schools' (COS2M-Pastor), thus subordinating women and designating them as those fit to work only with women and children (Fikru, 2006, 21). As in the case of women's involvement in decision-making and evangelism, women's involvement in leadership at the local level depends on geographical area. Although, in theory, the policy decision reached every area, many conservative congregations do not allow women to share in lay liturgical leadership (Women's ordination workshop, 1998, 17, group work report). This was confirmed by my own observation in two congregations where all the leadership on the day of my visit was conducted exclusively by men. Women and men together served by receiving the collection and providing hospitality to the congregation (c.f. Oduyoye, 2001, 104). Additionally, various women were engaged in teaching in the Sunday schools and in women's groups. While men were leading and preaching to the congregations, women in contrast were again being relegated to the less public, subordinate and domestic roles.

Very occasionally the tables are turned and more than one woman is invited to lead a service. This happened to me when I was invited to lead a liturgy while a woman was preaching. I was told by the elders to ask another woman to lead in prayer but I negotiated to ask a man to lead the prayers because inclusiveness seemed the better way for me, rather than having an exclusively female leadership.

Notwithstanding the exception above, the overall picture from the evidence of the fieldwork is that women's voices are muted with respect to liturgical leadership. Their voices are not heard in teaching and preaching in the worship programmes of

the decision-making bodies at national and synod level, but only in the small private staff programmes. Further, women are limited, as feminists typically note, to the sphere of the private, the domestic and childcare which defines women's service for them, without allowing them a voice (Nyengele, 2004, 42).

The EECMY senior leadership, I mean by this past and current presidents and General Secretaries of the EECMY, encourage women's involvement in leadership and ordination because women are the majority of those who attend Church and the EECMY believes that without the participation of these women, it is impossible to achieve the goal of Church ministry (Estefanos, 2001/200, 68, see Birri, 1998, 11). The aim of the Church appears to be that women participate equally with their male counterparts in leadership. However, the fieldwork demonstrated that women's participation in lay leadership ministry at all levels is far below the level aimed at by the Church. We have also observed how women are silenced in leadership at every level. Finally, then, we turn to examine women's silence in ordained ministry.

4. 3. The Silence of Women in Ordained Ministry

In this section I examine the ways in which women are both silent and silenced in the area of ordained ministry, according to the results of my fieldwork. I argue, as before, that women are silenced by church structures and practices in this as in every other area of their ministry. To set the ordination of women in the EECMY in its Ethiopian context it is important to explain that no other denomination in Ethiopia ordains women (that is the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the Roman Catholic Church and the Kale Heywet Church (Girma, 2000/2001, 28). The ordination of women in the EECMY, which began in 2000, is thus in its infancy in Ethiopia (Guta, 2000/2001, 11). Before discussing women's silence at each of the three levels of the Church, let me define briefly what is meant by ordination within the EECMY context.

In the EECMY context, ordination follows the church's recognition of God's gift of authority and calling for preaching the gospel and administering the Sacraments according to the command and promise of Christ, for the purpose of the continuance of the apostolic life and mission of the Church (Getachew, 2000/2001, 8, Negassa, 1998, 2). According to the EECMY Constitution, ordination is preceded by a call

from God which comes through a local congregation, which recognises the call and the necessary gifts for ministry (Constitution, 2005, 21). This call is tested by the Parish Council before it can go forward to the Synod Council. If the call is recognised and confirmed by the Synod, the ordinand is trained at one of the EECMY Seminars, and their studies are funded by either the regional Synod office or by the local Congregation. As we shall see, many congregations prefer to pay for men. Women are therefore disadvantaged because they are not funded. One reason for this might be that the congregation fears that women might leave their congregation to live in another place because of marriage traditions (Ordination Workshop, 1998, 3). There are two further possible reasons for why the congregations are afraid. One is that the woman might be one of the best contributors for the church ministry such as in handicrafts for fundraising and in hospitality. The other could be that the woman might herself become influential in her ministry. Thus, the congregation feared that they might lose her. To keep the woman for the congregation, the only way forward is to block the process of her training. Although this could be a good solution for the congregation, it is a loss for the woman as she would miss her calling and her theological education.

Ordination takes place in the local congregation and the ordained ministers work in the parish and are paid by the body they serve. Ordination has a long history in the Western Synod because the first ordained man in the EECMY, Dafa Jamo, ordained in 1941, was from the Western Synod (Bakke, 1987, 138). The issue of women's ordination was also initiated by the Western Synod in 1980 (Birri, 1987, 2). Finally, after 20 years the Western Synod saw the fruit of its work when the 15th General Assembly passed a policy decision to ordain women in 1997 (Daba, 2000/2001, 20). Three years later the EECMY Western Synod Bodji Congregation extended a call to ordain the first woman (Bodji Congregation resolution number 76/92 [Ethiopian Calendar] and Parish, 02/12/99) (see Getachew, 2000/2001, 9). The EECMY Western Synod Convention approved the call of myself for the ministry of Word and Sacraments on May 16, 2000, by resolution number 349/92 (Dunfa, 2007, 42, Western Synod Annual Report 2000), the first ordained woman in EECMY.

Having explained the historical background of women's ordination in the EECMY, let us now continue to examine the silence of women in ordination at the national level.

4.3.1. The Silence of Women in Ordained Ministry at the National Level

In this section I demonstrate that the EECMY officers at the National level have failed both to implement and also to encourage the implementation of the policy to promote the ordination of women which they originally endorsed. The comment of this male interviewee was similar to that of many other respondents,

The national level does not have any authority to call women for ordination but it is a key structure to pass the policy decision from the General Assembly and to follow up the implementation of policy decision on women's ordination (I, 35, COS1M).

Although the decision-making bodies and officers at the national level cannot themselves extend any call to ordain women, they are nevertheless vital to the process because they are the ones with the necessary authority not only to have passed the policies but also to continually urge the synods to implement and promote the policy decision to ordain women within their areas.

A number of my respondents indicated that the officers at the national level have not worked efficiently or effectively for the implementation of the policy on women's ordination. For example, a woman indicated:

The EECMY took 20 years to come to the final decision which was too long. In addition it is now 13 years since this was decided but many synods still have not made any move to ordain women and the national level has not taken any measures to put pressure on the synods particularly on those which have not made any effort to implement the policy (COS1F).

I will show that the statement above is, in fact, accurate, but, I acknowledge that, at first sight, the EECMY at a national level appears to have played an important role in the implementation of the policy decision to ordain women. For example, one of my respondents said that 'the EECMY arranged workshops and a consultation to provide information and to raise awareness of the decision to ordain women' (COS1M). There have been three workshops one in 1989, the second in 1991 and the third in 1998. The purpose of these events was to motivate the participants to take the message to synods, parishes and congregations in order to speed up the implementation of the policy. Niguse, the former EECMY women's coordinator

comments that following the decision to ordain women, workshops were held in order to raise awareness at all levels (c.f. Niguse 1991, 6). This was to make clear that women are included in the ordained ministry like their male counterparts. However, on closer examination the workshops and consultation raise a number of serious problems.

First, although women were supposed to be the main target group for the workshops, their representation was much smaller than that of men. As indicated in the Women's Ordination Workshop Report, women's participation varied considerably across the three workshops. The total number of participants in the first workshop was 31, of whom only 4 were women (13% women). For the second, there were 41 of whom only 3 were women (7% women). For the third workshop, the total number was 56 of whom 27 were women (48% women) (women's ordination workshop report, 1998). According to this information, the 3rd workshop did show significant progress. However, women were still in the minority at this series of events where they were intended to be the target group. The workshops therefore failed to inform and motivate women other than the minority who attended. I had a conversation with a woman who attended the workshop. She told me that 'when the invitation for this workshop came to the parish leader, he presented it to the parish Council in order to decide for a necessary payment. Then it was said that the congregation would pay for only 6 participants that was 5 men and myself from my Synod, she meant that had the parish leader wanted to send more women, he would have persuaded the Council, but it seemed that he was willing to send the men rather than women because he could assume that women's empowerment was less important for the Church. According to the above respondent women were under-represented in the workshop in her case because the parish leader did not invite women but only invited men. Perhaps he thought that women's participation was less important. In addition, there was also a financial constraint for women but the men were funded by the congregation. Therefore, the congregation, as well as the leader, also supported the men's involvement rather than paying for women.

Second, and even more serious, was the fact that, although the workshops did give information about women's ordination, they did not motivate either women or men attending them to spread the news that ordination was open to women and to

encourage churches to call women for ordination. Moreover, it was the parish leaders who sent the people to the workshop. They are the ones who have the authority to take action for implementing the policy or to delay. It appears that they choose to prevent women from attending the workshops unless they are to be considered the last one. Moreover, it seems difficult to expect encouragement for women's education from a workshop which was led by men who are very resistant to implementing the policy decision that supports women's education. However, one man said that 'if the Church gives empowerment on women's ordination to both men and women, more synods would take action to ordain women. Yet, priority is always given to men only. Additionally, men on decision-making bodies do not want to discuss women's ordination as a main agenda item' (COS1M) (pastor). This male respondent was sympathetic to women as we can see from his argument. He revealed two further important issues, one is that the Church's workshops for empowerment were not inclusive as only the men gained priority to attend the empowerment workshop. This was their preference rather than women's ordination. Secondly, women who chose to learn about women's ordination were excluded and their empowerment was ignored.

Considering the representation in the workshop, out of a total of 23 presenters in the three workshops, only 4 were women (17%). The effect of this significant gender imbalance resulted in a preponderance of male perspectives against the ordination of women over women's perspectives which were in support of women's ordination (see Ordination workshop, 1989, 6, 1991, 3, 1998, 4, Bazezew, 2006, 95, Kasahun, 2006, 23). Even though the four women present did 'speak for themselves,' their number was so low that the lack of sufficient input from them in the workshop inevitably affected the capacity of the workshops to motivate synods to encourage the call of women to ordination. In fact, ironically, the very workshops which were set up to support the ordination of women, by the impact of a male majority speaking against the ordination of women, may well have motivated other influential people to oppose the ordination of women.

Additionally, the infrequency of the workshops was another problem. Between the first workshop and the second there was a 2 year gap (1989-1991) and between the second and the third a 7 year gap (1991-1998). Such infrequency of workshops

inevitably led to a loss of momentum, focus and attention, and failed to keep the issue at the forefront of people's (Church members) minds. Rather than an attempt to motivate the church to ordain women, the workshops and consultations organised by the national decision-making bodies appear to show, at best, a reluctance to encourage the Church to ordain women. It was a strategic, deliberate attempt by the Church to keep the issue of women's ordination off the agenda by using a delaying tactic.

This reluctance is confirmed by my own experience since I observed the main decision-making bodies at the national level and noticed that the issue of women's ordination was not even an agenda item on the General Assembly and Council meetings. It was thus excluded from the agendas of the EECMY's strategic meetings. Oduyoye is right when she says, 'the denial of ordination to women is seen as a deliberate policy to keep women one step behind men in the service that all are called to render in God's household' (2001, 85). This was seen not only in the exclusion of the subject from agendas of annual meetings, but also in the lack of frequency between the workshops and also in the failure to focus on the attendance of women at the workshops in order to gather them together both to speak and to listen so as to motivate them. Additionally, the shortage of theologically trained Ethiopian women speakers should have led the organisers to find other African women theologians to speak if they were serious in their intention to promote the implementation of women's ordination (see chapter 5). The shortcomings of the workshops and conferences indicate that the EECMY is at best half-hearted concerning the issue of women's ordination and, at worst, is guilty of serious and deliberate negation of their own policy.

Further lack of practical encouragement towards women's ordination is seen in the failure at national level to employ ordained women staff at the Central Office. Until very recently (September 2009), no ordained women had been appointed, and the one woman appointed in 2009 was assigned to the women's section (Women's ministry report, 2009). This approach mirrors at national level a more general one of sidelining women to the sphere of women (and children). This sidelining suggests that the church would continue to restrict women to the traditional roles rather than taking the initiative to ordain women. The ratio of ordained men to ordained women

at the National Office is now ten to one (10%). The voice and representation of ordained women at national level is, therefore, thoroughly marginalized.

This silence of women in ordained ministry is happening despite the fact that, as Kanyoro says, ‘women wish to participate fully in the renewal of their churches. Their spiritual gifts for ministry need to be recognized in all of the life of the church, including ordained ministry’ (1991, 4, see Oduyoye, 1995, 212). Kanyoro’s view encourages the church to recognize women’s spiritual gifts. However, today many churches in Africa fail to consider women’s gifts in church ministry (preaching, leading and such like). This is true also within the EECMY because, as we have seen, many gifted women are forgotten. The reasons why the implementation of women’s ordination is slow could be many. For example, let me suggest one such possibility: ordination ministry is the necessary requirement for a senior leadership position in the EECMY. It makes a person a leader of a Church and opens up ways for that person to be a candidate to senior leadership such as the General Secretary of the EECMY (Western Synod Constitution, 2001, 13). If more women were ordained and served at the national level they could be candidates for any of the above positions. Since these positions have always been held by men, this could be the method which is used to distance women and keep them out of leadership.

Having seen the limitation of women’s participation in ordained ministry at national level, it is important to investigate whether the situation is different at the regional level.

4.3.2. The Silence of Women in Ordained Ministry at Regional Level

The regional level has three key functions in relation to encouraging the ordination of women. Two of these are, as at national level, both to implement the policy of ordaining women and to actively promote its implementation in their area. The third is to endorse the call to ordination which comes to them from the congregations through the parishes. In this section I will show that in all geographical areas, except the West, the Synods have singularly failed to fulfil any of these functions, and that even in the West progress is slow since only 22 women have been ordained in the last 10 years within the western synods (EECMY, women’s ministry office report, 2010).

First, I discuss the non-implementation of the EECMY policy decision to ordain women evidenced from both the statistics of ordained women and from my fieldwork. During my participant observations at a Synod Council meeting (I, 35, COS2), I held conversations with participants and was told that in the last twelve years, only the Western Synods have ordained women, except for one woman in the Central Ethiopia Synod, Addis Ababa. I finally discovered that 11 synods in the west and 1 synod in central Ethiopia have ordained women giving a total of 12 out of a total of 21 synods (48%).

The non activity of synods in promoting the ordination of women and thence the silence of ordained women is confirmed by the interviewees. For example, one of them said, 'I heard that the 19 ordained women are only from the western region. My question is why other synods are silent on this issue. My synod has not yet set any plan to ordain women' (I, 35, COS5F). Another woman expanded on this and by her final words implicitly confirmed the failure of the national level consultation and workshops referred to earlier. 'My synod has not yet thought of the ordination of women at all although the decision took place 12 years ago. I think the members have not received enough information yet' (I, 35, COS6M). According to these respondents, the regional level has not paid sufficient attention to the policy decision to ordain women.

I therefore contend that, during the last 14 (1997-2011) years, every member of the synod should have understood and accepted the policy decision, because there is a general rule that every regional level should approve the ordination of any person called to ordination by their congregation, which includes female candidates (General Assembly, 1997). However, although the door was opened for women from 1997 onwards, many synods have simply ignored the ordination of women. James comments on the approaches of those who resist the ordination of women. She says, there is 'much discrimination against women in the church most specifically regarding ordination into the ordained ministry' (1990, 177). For her, resisting women's ordination is discrimination against women's ministry. James' assessment is that 'the churches in Africa discriminate against women by refusing ordination

although the women in question may be qualified to the same level as men' (ibid, 1990, 177).

The problem then is not confined to Ethiopia, nor indeed is it confined to Africa, but the following examples of synods refusing to endorse the calling of individual women whose calling has been accepted by congregations and parishes a refusal, which, we noted above is against EECMY policy are certainly more blatant in their opposition than in a UK context. Additionally, one of the respondents cited below who was refused ordination, already has a degree in Theology. The refusal of the synod to endorse her ordination is further evidence that James' assessment is accurate. The woman said, 'I was officially called by my local congregation. The recommendation was sent to the regional level for further approval but the regional level rejected the recommendation from the local level' (I, 35, COS5F). Another similar incident was reported by another woman who reported, 'I was called by my local congregation and completed a pastors' course but some days before my ordination the regional level told me that I would not go for ordination' (I, 35, COS5). The above two women were refused at the regional level even though they were officially called by the appropriate legal body, which was the local congregation, and confirmed by the Parish Council. According to the above information the approach of these different synods seems to devalue the local recommendation although the local congregations are the base to call for ordination. In addition, these two women were hurt because the regional level did not show any sensitivity to them by carefully considering their call. This fits with the view of James because the above synods discriminated against women by not seriously considering their ordination.

This refusal to confirm the call of the women for ordination seems to be a result of male dominated synod councils. Although the regional level needs to be committed to implementing the policy and to take action to ordain women, it has instead blocked the implementation of the policy. The possible reasons for this are similar to those at national level in that the male dominated council at regional level could have similar fears about women sharing positions of authority with men. For example, there is one ordained woman at the regional level who immediately after her ordination was elected as a DMT director of a synod, and another woman was also elected as a parish leader (EECMY Central Synod annual report, 2005, Gimbi Jorgo

annual report, 2005). It seems problematic that men do not want to share leadership with women because of the problem that the status and power bring to them and which they already enjoy.

Although the recommendation of the previously mentioned woman for ordination was rejected by the church structures, many women believe that their calling has already been confirmed by God even before their ordination service. Thus, Birri says, 'God calls whom God wishes' (Birri, 1986, 10). God does not limit the call to ordination to men only, but he extends it to women also. Fikru makes a similar point when she says 'God has not assigned some key positions to men alone and less important ones to women' (2006, 23). She means that God's call to ordained ministry is for both men and women without gender distinction. Ordination is a matter of calling rather than gender. She concludes that the church has to consider the importance of women's ordination as evangelists as well as leaders of the church (2006, 23). Although Fikru speaks from her experience in the Kale Heywet Church, it is true also of the EECMY in calling both men and women to ordained ministry. In the case of the EECMY, its policy accords with Birri's view, but in practice the policy applied to women is being denied, and as a result women's callings are being denied and they are actively and deliberately being silenced in this ministry at both national and regional level by being rejected. We turn now to consider the situation at local level to see whether it is the same or different.

4.3.3. The Silence of Women in Ordained Ministry at Local Level

According to the EECMY Constitution, Article 25.2, the local level is the key structure at which a person (a man or a woman) is called to ordained ministry. I will demonstrate the silence of women at local level by showing how they have been excluded from ordained ministry because the local level has failed to extend a calling to them. There are four key issues which impact on the silence of women at this level. The first is lack of information about the ordination of women which results from the failures at national and synod level to provide information and to raise awareness, and which also results in a lack of strategic thinking about the issue. The second is a lack of available theological education and training for women. A third is ignorance about the positive and different kind of contribution that ordained women might make, and finally there is the vicious circle of the opposition to the ordination

of women at congregational level, resulting both from male refusal and from the very fact of the silence of women themselves which prevents them from demonstrating their gifts and calling.

First, I consider the lack of information leading to a lack of strategic thinking resulting in a failure to call women to ordination in the congregations. As one woman said, 'my congregation has not made any plan to ordain women because the community has not gained enough information on the issue' (I, 35, COS2CONF). Another related issue this raises is the natural conservatism of rural congregations, which do not welcome change. Even after 10 years of women being ordained, a male pastor could comment, 'the Parish Council has not yet discussed women's ordination because it is new for all of us' (I, 35, COS6PM). According to this information, the main problem of the grassroots was that they have not received clear information on the decision of women's ordination. This was supported by women respondents to the questionnaires at congregation level by 23 out of a total of 31 (74%).

Second, there seems to be a systematic attempt to exclude women from ordination by means of a lack of theological training which is a central criterion for ordination. For example, a male pastor said that 'since we do not have theologically trained women we have not yet ordained women' (I, 35, COS7CONM). However, men have not faced the same problem because they have the opportunity and financial support for training in theology. The attitude of at least some men seems to be that described by Storkey, 'men study theology, women sew for the bazaar' (1995, 47). It is important to look behind this to discover why women cannot be or have not been trained. It is common for women to contribute funds to the Synod Office for theological training through handicrafts but it is the men who are sent to complete their theological training and go for ordination because they are supplied with all the necessary payment for their studies through the Synod office. It is a fact that such funding is not made available for women.

Third, the effect of silencing women by not ordaining them means that their gifts cannot be recognised because they cannot practise them in public in order for people to acknowledge them and benefit from them. Birri recognises this when he says that the congregation must give women the opportunity to exercise their gifts at

congregational level and make them as visible as possible in the life of their congregations (1998, 12, Getachew, 2000-2001). Currently, to deny ordination to women leads to a limitation of the talents those women can share.

Graham argues that, 'at the same time as advocates maintain that women are equivalent and equal to men, there are other people who campaign for women's ordination precisely because women may or will bring differential and novel experiences and qualities to the priesthood' (1995, 45). According to Graham, not only would women's gifts be lost but in some cases these would be different from those of men. This does not necessarily mean that women would bring huge change but they can add different contributions in order to bring some changes to church life. This is because, generally speaking, women are collaborative rather than hierarchal (c.f. Ward, 2009, 84). Women pastors are approachable for both men and women, particularly women can benefit from women pastors as they can share their sorrows and joys. Women's participation in ordained ministry may well make a difference to how that ministry develops.

During my participant observations, two of the synods I visited informed me that only a few of their congregations called women for ordained ministry. For example, the Western Synod consists of a total of 406 established congregations but only 3 congregations have extended a call to ordain women (less than 0.1%). This particular synod has a total of 81 ordained pastors of which only 2 are women (just over 2%). Similarly, Gimbi Jorgo consists of a total of 326 established congregations and only 2 congregations have ordained women (0.6 %). They have a total of 57 ordained pastors of which only 2 are women (4%) (EECMY statistics, 2008/2009, see Gimbi Jorgo statistic and Western Synod statistic, 2008/2009). This small percentage shows that the ordination of women, even in its most active location within the EECMY, is very low. Thus there is a profound silence with respect to women's ordination at the local level just as there is at national and regional levels because, as we have said, most of the congregation have not received clear information with regards to women's ordination. By increasing awareness of the decision about women's ordination the EECMY needs to empower the local congregations and enable them to grasp the issue of women's ordination. This will lead to more women being called.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued from the fieldwork that women are seriously marginalized in exercising both liturgical leadership and in being called to ordination in the EECMY at all levels. I have shown how women have been excluded by men from public liturgical leadership at General Assembly, National and Synod Councils and Synod Conventions. I have also shown how their liturgical leadership has been restricted to small groups or staff devotions at national and regional levels.

Although women are allowed on some occasions to participate in preaching and teaching at grassroots level, they are excluded from leading liturgical worship at the Sunday service in their congregations for a number of reasons including notions of authority, public role and purity. Women have been subject to the control of men in the exercise of their ministry, allowed to lead in some contexts but not in others, sidelined at public occasions and allocated subordinate menial roles of serving food and providing accommodation.

The extent of the silence of women in ordained ministry is high at all levels because there are still many EECMY synods where the legitimate call of women from the congregations to ordination is rejected. It was evidenced that only 23 women have received ordination throughout the EECMY although the decision to ordain women was approved 14 years ago. In addition, there is only one ordained woman staff member at the national level which shows that women's ordination, unlike that of men, is less significant at this level. At regional level it is even worse since there is no ordained woman on the senior staff in any synod. Further, men are prioritized over women for access to funds for theological education, without which a woman cannot be ordained.

I have, therefore, argued and demonstrated that women are thoroughly marginalized in their exercise of liturgical leadership and in their attempts to respond to the call to ordination by being variously and at different times and at different levels excluded, sidelined, abused, exploited, subordinated and confined to the private and domestic spheres.

4.5. Key observations from Chapters 3 and 4

4.5.1. Exclusion

The key observations are divided into those that apply to all four areas of ministry, those that apply to two or three areas and those that apply to only one. First, women are marginalized in all four ministries by experiencing exclusion and subordination. They are excluded from decision and policy-making in evangelism by not experiencing representation by women on those committees where the power is, held where decisions about the life and future of the church are made, and where decisions about women's lives and futures are made. It is, with few exceptions, the men who hold decision-making and strategic managerial positions. These exceptions are the two synods where one woman leads the parish and in the other synod a woman leads the department of DMT. This observation is acknowledged by Fiorenza who says 'although the church is called our mother and referred to with the pronoun 'she', it is personified and governed by fathers and brothers only' (Fiorenza, 1985, 4, see Buhrig, 1993, 13). This is true for the EECMY, particularly with respect to ordination. Apart from a very few women, most are excluded from being ordained, from living out a 'yes' to God's call. They may be excluded at congregational, parish or synod level, but they are excluded; the way is barred to their being ordained and numbers of ordained women are exceedingly small. There are only 23 ordained women out of a total of 2,061 pastors in the whole EECMY (1%) (EECMY Statistics, 2009). Women are also excluded Lay liturgical leadership. Their exclusion can be summarised as from being excluded from the public realm, from public acknowledgement, public affirmation and recognition, whether that is in an Assembly, Convention, or a Sunday worship service.

4.5.2. Participation

Not only are women excluded from key areas but their participation in all four areas of ministry is also inadequate. For example, in decision and policy-making meetings for evangelism at all levels women's attempts at participation were ignored or they were not permitted to speak, or they attempted to speak and were silenced, or they

were ridiculed, or they chose not to speak out of fear. Lack of participation was experienced particularly at national and regional levels in high level decision-making meetings such as councils, and also at parish levels. Women have not participated in ordination, that is, they have been present in the Church when the Word was preached or the sacraments were blessed, but they have only been observers. Similarly lay leaders at conventions and councils and at Sunday worship have, as two respondents expressed it, simply sat and observed while the men participated.

4.5.3. Theological Education and Training

A further characteristic of women's marginalization in their ministries was their lack of theological education and training. This seemed to be of three kinds. Women at parish and congregational level were marginalised because of their lack of basic education. For example, it was much more difficult for them to access questionnaires or Bible stories because they were illiterate. More seriously and more directly relevant women could not begin to access theological education because of their lack of general education. Barriers to ordination and lay leadership were partly the lack of access to theological education, relating both to marginalisation of women in relation to funds more easily accessed by men, and also lack of access to theological education because of cultural limitations of early marriage and domestic situations. With respect to decision and policy-making decisions, women were marginalised by their lack of access to training in public speaking, decision-making and for managerial posts.

A further observation that epitomises women's marginalisation in ministry is the level of control that men exercise over them. Men control women by blocking their access to ordination and to decision-making meetings. Men control women by telling them what they can and cannot do, for example in relation to domestic responsibilities and attending decision-making meetings or workshops, and in relation to which services of worship they can and cannot lead. This control is at odds with the Church's own policy decisions and some of it is indirect, for example, it is contained in preaching rotas which exclude women, or it is found in private lists of so-called women representatives for decision-making bodies, which are so private that the women do not know of their existence or that they have been 'elected' to

hold a representative role. Such control is deeply patriarchal and is entirely at odds with liberation theology.

4.5.4. Women's Gifts

The final observation relates to the number of direct and indirect references to women's gifts and the ways in which their marginalization prevents them from using them, sometimes at all, and sometimes fully, to serve the Church. The fieldwork cited in the chapters shows that on very few occasions is there opportunity for women to use their gifts. On those occasions when the gifts are manifested there is recognition of them which leads to positive developments for the good of the individual and of the Church. For example, there was one story of a woman who gave generously it was recognised and inspired others to give, and the woman herself was affirmed. There was another story of a woman who preached, her gifts were recognised by overseas missionaries and she was given a travel scholarship. In contrast, however, there were also numerous references to gifts not being recognised, or not being able to use or develop their gifts.

The key observations discussed in this section serve to emphasise the seriousness and all-pervading nature of the marginalization of women in ministry in the EECMY. Before it is possible to respond to this serious problem of woman's silence in ministry, it is necessary first to analyse the reasons for it, with reference to the four chosen areas and this is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Reasons for the silence of women in the holistic ministry of the EECMY

5.1. Introduction

Having discussed in the previous chapter the ways in which women are both silent and silenced in the ministry of the EECMY, I now turn to discuss the reasons for this in order to identify areas needing change and transformation, which will be the subject of chapter 6. I have organized these reasons under the two sections of cultural influences and theological influences which were the two recurring themes identified during the fieldwork. I need to acknowledge at the outset that culture and theology in Ethiopia are inseparable, each has had a huge influence on the other, not least because of the impact of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) both on the culture of Ethiopia and on members of the EECMY who previously belonged to the EOC (Genene, 2005, 74; Kanyoro, 2002, 14).

More particularly, I must include a further ‘foreign’ cultural influence on the EECMY, closely interwoven with theological influence of the western Protestant missionaries who brought the gospel in the 19th century and established a Lutheran church from which the national church, the EECMY, developed. The gospel the missionaries brought was enshrined in a western culture, a culture not as influential as Ethiopian culture, but one which in some respects, as we shall see, has contributed significantly to the silence of women in the EECMY through its own western patriarchal culture and patriarchal biblical theology.

I argue that the patriarchal nature of Ethiopian and Western (missionary) cultures and theologies are fundamental contributors to the silence of women in their ministry within the EECMY. I will begin by discussing cultural reasons for the silence of women because culture is part of the very life of the Ethiopian people. I will follow this with a discussion of the theological reasons because the EECMY lives by its biblical theology.

5.2. Cultural influences

First, I must define what I mean by culture. Culture is an overarching word, covering an enormous range of influences upon people. Researchers like Almaz (from Ethiopia) define culture as a complex set of attitudes, lifestyle, system of beliefs, patterns of behaviour, norms, rituals and language which can be rational or irrational, and negative or positive traditions. Over a period of time, they become institutionalized and rationalized into a society's way of life (Almaz, 1998, 3; Oduyoye 2001, 13, 4; Kanyoro, 2002, 15).

A key characteristic of the culture of Ethiopia according to the findings of my fieldwork and with reference to my thesis is its fundamental patriarchal nature. Men rule over women in all aspects of life, through the unequal distribution of power in government, society, family and church (Eshete 2000, 8, 17). Genene claims, similarly, that this patriarchal culture is deeply rooted and influences every cultural setting within Ethiopia in both church and society (2005, 4). Ethiopian culture operates to the advantage of men, through a range of family relations and structures (Eshete, 2000, 9; Rippenburg 1997, 34).

Men's power over women

Unequal power lies at the heart of the family where the father is the head of the household, having authority and power over women and children. For example, although the law of the country affirms women's right to inherit property, the women are never given any inheritance and it would bring shame on them to ask for it because they are not part of the family except by marriage. Ethiopian men can also use considerable physical power over women, for example, there is abduction and rape which results in unexpected pregnancy (Genene, 2005, 74; Eshete, 2000, 8). Violence against women affects women's ministry in various ways; for example, a woman respondent said, 'I am an elder of one congregation where a man who raped a neighbour's girl was leading the elders' committee from another district' (COS2CONF). The effect of rape on women is to make them feel unclean and often too ashamed to speak out about it. Its very effect is to silence them. Many women spoke about the effect of rape on women's ministry. There are two further points to draw out from this case. One is that the power of men is such that it can be known that a man has raped a girl and yet he still dares and is permitted to be an elder and to

lead a congregation. The second point is that the shame of the girl transferred to the woman who told the story because she felt the same shame seeing the man still in a position of power over a congregation. One further example will be enough to demonstrate the silencing effect of the destructive power of men over women. Through a further conversation with a woman, I learned that a man was unfaithful to his wife who was an elder of a congregation. The wife was affected in two ways, as she lost her husband and her sense of self worth. To add to this shame the congregation also wished to punish her by dismissing her from her office, even though it was clear to all that the fault lay with the man. This is not a rare phenomenon but it silences women. In general the effect of such violence is to make women ashamed, lose their self-respect and their dignity, which becomes a major reason for their silence in public, affecting all four areas of ministry.

5.2.1 Culture in the churches

I will begin by discussing the cultural effects of the EOC and the Lutheran missionaries on women in ministry in the EECMY.

The Influence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC)

The attitude of the EOC to women's ministry was described by a male respondent who recently came to the EECMY from an EOC background. He said, 'the EOC tradition strongly silenced women as they are not allowed to participate in public ministry but very often they give domestic service' (I, 35, COS4MP). The influence of the EOC on the EECMY is strengthened by EECMY members like the interviewee who grew up within the EOC and accepted and internalised its religious and cultural traditions with respect to women and then carry those patriarchal traditions across into the EECMY. Attitudes towards women's public ministry are even more negative in the EOC. As Deressa argues, within the EOC, 'women's participation in leadership and decision-making in churches is limited. Women's ordination to priesthood is unheard of in the EOC' (2003, 26). Priesthood and leadership are reserved for males; women attend church, have a significant role in the practical and domestic tasks of preparing the eucharist vessels (bread and wine) and may very occasionally form a choir. Zelelew suggests that within the EOC over half a million men are clergy. She further comments that church officials always tell her

not to raise the issue of women becoming clergy (2005, 12), revealing their opposition to women's ordination. The exclusion of women from leadership positions in the EOC continues to influence EECMY members, particularly in the northern part of the country where the EOC is dominant, with the result that women are still currently excluded from ordination in the northern synod of the EECMY.

Moreover, EOC opposition to the ordination of women on the grounds of their monthly impurity is sharper than it is in the EECMY, but again the EECMY is influenced through its converts. For example, three male respondents agreed with a woman who said, 'in the EOC, women's seats are separated from the men's seat' (I, 35, COS2CNF). Separation seems to be related to what tradition refers to as women's monthly impurity from which, the EOC argues, men should keep away in order not to be contaminated by women at the holy place (church). Owanikin confirms that women's uncleanness is on the basis of the flow of blood during menstruation as well as during childbirth (1995, 211; Ruether 1983, 194; Ringe, 1992, 39-40; Magersa 2002, 9). Although this flow of blood is not continuous, the EOC, which is strongly influenced by Jewish practices, connects it with Lev. 12: 1-5 which explains the uncleanness of women after child birth (c.f. Ruether, 2001, 137). Further, the EOC then excludes women not only from participation in services, but also sometimes from the building itself.

Having considered the effects of the EOC on the exclusion of women from leadership and ordination in the EECMY, let us now consider the influence of Lutheran missionaries on the EECMY's attitudes to women's ministry in the EECMY.

Western Missionary influence

Two different Lutheran missions have been particularly active in Ethiopia, the evangelical Lutheran missionaries from Germany and Lutheran missionaries from Norway. Both of them have played significant roles in the west and southern parts of Ethiopia. In this section I will argue that German missionaries encouraged the ministry of women whereas Norwegian missionaries contributed to the development of an EECMY culture which considered that public ministry and leadership were not appropriate roles for women.

In the 19th century Lutheran missionaries from Germany carried out evangelistic ministry in the western part of the country, in Wallega (Aren, 1978, 105; Bakke, 1987, 93-5; Eide, 2000, 54). The German Hermannsburg Missionaries (GHM) arrived at Aira Wallga in January 1939, while the Norwegian Lutheran missionaries came to the south in 1948. According to Bakke, the German missionaries settled at Aira and started living like ordinary people among the community (1987, 138).

Many respondents from western Ethiopia commented that these missionaries were listening to women. One woman told me that, ‘we [women] had Bible studies at missionaries’ houses. A man who was leading the Bible study was listening to us and answering our questions’ (COS3CONF). This woman was young when she had a Bible study with the missionaries. She liked the fact that the missionaries were listening to women and taking them seriously. Their approach encouraged many women to attend the Bible studies. Since the missionaries were very open to women, one woman went to one of the missionary personnel with an urgent request. It was during the time of the Second World War when the missionaries had to leave for Germany. As Bakke writes, ‘A request urging them to ordain Dafa came from one outstanding lady among the evangelical leaders in Ethiopia, Nasise Liban’ (1987, 138, c.f. Birri, 2010, 8).

Dafa was ordained in 1941 by the recommendation of a single woman. This was an historic request from a woman which is remembered throughout the history of women in the western synod. We have seen in the women’s representation and participation in decision-making at synod level in the western synods that they have a much better, more progressive attitude based on the more egalitarian approach of the German missionaries. The synods in the west have therefore continued the tradition of including women in all four areas of ministry under discussion, without however fully implementing the EECMY’s policy decisions.

In contrast, a woman from the other synod said, ‘the missionaries who were in the south did not allow women to preach the gospel on Sundays but they could lead Sunday schools with children’ (COS6F). Another woman from the south said ‘a missionary told me that girls are allowed to learn up to 3rd grade but they must learn how to be a good wife’ (COS7COF). We see in this case an attempt by missionaries

from the Norwegian Lutheran Church to suggest that women are less capable than men in teaching and to confine them to domesticity and to work with children, not adults. This attitude reinforces a tale in Ethiopia which says ‘women are child with long legs’ (Negasa, 1989, 8).

From the beginning, in the most part of the synods in the EECMY, women were excluded from the public ministry of preaching and were expected to be passive and obedient. It is concerning that these Norwegian missionaries who were educated in the west and were considered to have the best knowledge and credibility, nevertheless encouraged women to learn domestic chores rather than to follow formal education which would open the way to exercising ministry. These stories show how patriarchy was not only endemic in Ethiopia but was also imported from some of the Protestant Christian churches in Europe into the foundations of the EECMY in the south. When women internalised this patriarchal attitude they then did not seek representation and participation in decision-making bodies because they viewed themselves as passive receivers; it was the men who made the decisions.

5.2.1. Men are the decision-makers and speakers

One reason for the exclusion of women from decision-making and from strategic committees in ministry is the deeply patriarchal perception that men are the decision-makers, rather than women and women’s acceptance of this verdict. For example, a male interviewee was one among many to hold the view that, ‘in Ethiopia, both in church and society, decisions are made only by men’ (COS6M). This view was representative of many similar comments made by woman

‘Even in the Church since most of the decisions are from the men’s perspectives, women prefer to be silent. Thus, the society assumes that women are mentally weak which has also been internalised by women themselves’ (COS4CNF).

However, this does not mean that women cannot think and be creative but, as Genene explains, they make themselves powerless because they have internalised the cultural expectation (2005, 7).

The internalisation of the social construct of patriarchy has had a serious impact on women’s participation in ministry. This was evident from the fieldwork data on the influence of grandparents, parents, family and friends, and not least women themselves on the upbringing of girls in the family to be quiet, particularly in the

presence of men even within the family. The impact of this patriarchal structure seriously jeopardises women's attempts at a fuller participation in committee meetings at all levels of the Church. For example, a woman recalled her experience, saying 'I always feel fear to speak in the meeting although I may have important points about women's involvement in decision-making meetings' (I, 35, COS3F).

Her fear might have been that the men would not accept the comment that she wanted to make or that she really wanted to remain silent in the presence of men for cultural reasons. This accords with the results of the questionnaires where 51% of respondents chose cultural norms as the reason for women's silence (Q11, Decision-making CONM).

According to Genene, patriarchal ideology bases its oppression on the 'premise that men are biologically superior to women and women are biologically weak' (2005, 4). The assumptions which say women are weak may affect women's ministry in many ways. For example, a male evangelist who said, 'since women's physical weakness is an undeniable fact, they may not be fit for evangelistic outreach' (COS4CONM), might be implying far more than women cannot walk long distances because they are physically weak. He could also be referring to pregnant women who might not be able to stand for long periods of time for teaching and preaching as well as serving the Holy Communion. He may also be suggesting that there is no point in training women for church ministry because of their physical weakness.

Yet, the judgement that simply because women are physically weaker than men they are therefore unsuited to the public role is unfounded; it creates an unhelpful dualism between men and women. Indeed, one might argue that some of the qualities of caring and attention to relationships which they would bring are much needed in the public sphere of decision-making on committees and the relational ways in which they may preach. In addition, ministry is about calling, not strength; there is no one who is called because of his physical strength (Fikru, 2006, 21). 58% of the female respondents to questionnaires agreed that ministry is based on calling (Q1 Ministry, CONF).

5.2.2. Women are not allowed to make decisions even about themselves

In this section I will show how the exclusion of women from decisions about themselves, from birth to marriage and beyond, provides a significant psychological reason for the silence of women in all aspects of their lives and therefore including all areas of ministry, which is often not recognised by them. A salient fact affecting both men and women's capacity to believe that women can be involved in any decision-making is that throughout women's lives they are not allowed to make decisions about themselves; rather, decisions about them are made by men, first by their fathers and brothers, and then by their husbands (Genene, 2005, 80).

In a number of cases, for example, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the decisions made for them are actually physically harmful, even dangerous, as well as psychologically damaging. At the very least women are alienated from decisions about their own bodies. Other decisions, such as the muted celebrations which accompany the birth of a baby girl devalue females giving out the constant message that the male is worthy of greater celebration, better education, and public affirmation. All of this has significant detrimental psychological effects on women, undermining their confidence and sense of self-worth, and rendering them voiceless in many aspects of their lives, including all aspects of ministry (workshop EECMY on Violence Against women, Makuriaw, 2006, 18; Dunfa, 2006, 25; Rebera, 1994, 105-113).

Circumcision of girls

Female genital mutilation (FGM) describes those procedures that involve partial or total removal of the female external genitalia and/or injury to the female genital organs for cultural reasons (Yasuneh, 2006, 6). The most extreme form of FGM is infibulation, the removal of the clitoris, labia minora, and the stitching together of the labia majora - those parts of the women's body that contain very important nerves to produce sexual enjoyment (Yesuneh, 2006, 4; c.f. Pemberton 2003, 149,). The circumciser leaves a small opening for intercourse and menstruation, and she then binds together the legs until stitches adhere. Often the removal of the stitches is part of a wedding night ritual (Harmful Traditional practices in Ethiopia 1997, see Yesuneh 2006, 1-2; Almaz, 1998-50, 3; Pemberton, 2003, 149).

According to Yasuneh, FGM is internationally recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It is pointed out that the majority of the girls are circumcised between 8-12 and 22 years of age (Pemberton 2003, 145; c.f. Kanyoro, 2002, 83). The practice is carried out on two million girls and young women particularly in Africa and Asian countries (Dibisa, 2000, 18; *Harmful Practices in Ethiopia*, 11-13; c.f. Yasuneh, 2006, 8). In general an estimated 135 million girls have undergone FGM with dire consequences ranging from infection to chronic disease (Amnesty, USA, 2010).

Who makes the decision about girls' circumcision? Two women told me the same story and I listened to another woman. All three agreed that 'girls' circumcision is decided by their parents' (I, 35, COS2CONF). The woman spoke from her own experience that women are denied the right to make a decision about their own bodies. Furthermore, circumcision is one of the most multilayered and problematic dimensions of the Ethiopian patriarchal social system with far reaching consequences for women's health and well-being as well as their sense of wholeness. The emotional pain of losing a significant part of the body without the consent of the girl is akin to abuse and rape (National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia (NCTPE) 1999, 11-14). Not only do women suffer this pain, but they are not even permitted to speak of it.

In most African cultures including Ethiopia, women are obliged to go through the practice of circumcision because it is one of the rites of passage to womanhood. In this respect other people benefit at the expense of the girl: the parents collect a lot of money on this occasion. Virginity is also assured for the men. One female respondent among many described it as 'a patriarchal system of abusing women's bodies for the benefit of the family to collect money and to control women for the men' (I, 35, COS5CONF). Thus women must undergo a very painful and harmful process, and be deliberately deprived of their sexual pleasure in order to be controlled and forcibly preserved for their husbands (Dibisa, 2003, 12; Yesuneh 2006, 6, c.f. Dhunfa, 2004, 7, Almaz, 1998, 3, *Harmful Traditional Practices in Ethiopia* 1997, 16-19). Cultural norms dictate that even educated mothers would not let their girls go without circumcision indicating the power that this oppressive practice has in the culture (Terefe 2005, 12, see Yesuneh, 2006, 4, see Dhunfa, 2005).

The serious medical consequences of circumcision inevitably prevent some women from engaging in ministry through ill-health, including those conditions that would render them unclean. It is not surprising that the details of such cases were rarely reported in interviews because men and even women speaking about women's bodies, particularly genitalia, is taboo. One woman with whom many other women agreed dared to say to me, 'I know a woman who has a severe health problem since the day of her circumcision but she has not told any one else because it is taboo and she is still suffering' (COS3CONF). Another woman said, 'during my circumcision I experienced great pain which has continued to be a serious health problem during childbirth' (I, 35, COS3FCON). The experience itself is terribly painful because neither those who perform the circumcision nor the parents of the girl provide any anaesthetic or medication for her. In a number of cases as above, pain remains with the girl for a long time after the circumcision. Further, these practices currently expose many girls to HIV problems because of the unhygienic condition of the instruments used. Yet other health problems caused by the practice are the appalling gynaecological, urinary and bowel conditions.

Circumcision of girls at puberty is a barbaric and powerful example of the way in which women have been conditioned and indoctrinated into a profound silence through abuse and destruction of their wholeness. How might a woman who has suffered such violation consider herself or be considered by others to be one who may celebrate the sacraments? Health problems relating to continual bleeding reinforce the indoctrinated knowledge of uncleanness (Dibisa, 2003, 23), which excludes them from any public ministry. More profoundly, the practice tells women that they are under the control of men; it takes away self confidence and self worth, and by the silence it requires, it reinforces silence as their condition in other aspects of life, so that they cannot think of themselves, exposed, standing in front of others as public ministers.

Birth

Many women respondents felt that their low sense of self esteem began even before they encountered FGM, in fact at birth (e.g. I, 35, COS6CONF). In most of the tribal groups of Ethiopia, the rituals of birth privilege boys above girls (Eshete 2000, 17).

For example, one woman told me that in Arsi (southern Ethiopia) ‘when a baby girl is born women say a congratulatory ululation three times but if the baby is a son, they say it five times’ (I, 35, COS2FCON). This case provides an example of women being party to discrimination against themselves in their number of ululations. Terefe from Ethiopia comments that it is common practice for the rite of bathing to take place after four days for a girl but after a great feast on the fifth day for a boy (2003, 2).

Similarly the Oromo tribe prefer a boy rather than a girl. For example, there is a proverb in the Oromo culture which says, *‘Ilma maaliif dhalchu Maqaa abbaa dhahuuf malee* meaning: ‘Why does one bear a son? Is that not to extend the father’s name?’ (Eshete 2000, 16). Oromos regard a son (*ilmaa*) as important for lineage, economic benefits, and physical support and as a leader. In contrast the need for girls is minimal; they are simply useful for doing domestic chores. Birth then is the beginning of the story of devaluing women and of making them party to the downgrading of their worth. It makes it difficult for them to recognise their potential and their gifts. The process relates indirectly yet powerfully to women’s inability to recognise in themselves and in others that they are capable of representing themselves and others in ministry, and able to participate in public ministry.

Childhood

The role of women to be servants and burden bearers who do most of the work, and also to be submissive and obedient to men is assumed from early childhood. A woman told me that ‘my mother advised me that I should not speak against my brothers but show them complete submission because I am a girl’ (COS2COF). According to the above woman, her mother actually taught her low self-esteem and to become submissive and a servant of the males in the family. Since she has grown up in such a way it would be very difficult for her to claim her rights as a Christian woman. She seems more like someone’s property or slave. Amadiume cited by Pemberton illustrates this traditional attitude of African culture towards women (including Ethiopian) when she says, ‘The wife bears sons to inherit the land but she bears daughters to work the land and to be bags of money’ (Pemberton, 2003, 78; c.f. Hurisa 2003, 9-10). The upbringing of girls in this way has a negative effect on their ministry because they do not have a sense of themselves as persons. As public

ministry involves both confident speech and showing initiative, or taking the lead, it is difficult for women to reconcile what they have been socialised into with these real meanings of ministry which convey liberation rather than domination. From their past experience, speaking out and voicing concerns seems to be disobedient. It is difficult for such women to participate in all four areas of ministry, since decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination all requires these abilities.

5.2.5. Marriage

According to one woman, ‘the husband has full authority over his wife and the rest of his property’ (I, 35, COS6F). Women in marriage are viewed as property in that in the paying and receiving of a dowry, they are effectively bought and sold. Terefe, an Ethiopian, agrees, arguing that in marriage, a woman is one who serves her husband and is considered as one of the household objects. ‘When the husband needs/finds it necessary, he can move her to wherever he wants her to be’ (2005, 6). She indicates therefore that the wife is his object once transferred to him through marriage on payment of the bride price, and he can do anything he wishes with her because property cannot challenge its owner. If a woman is the property of her husband, she cannot have freedom to exercise authority over her husband and other men in leadership, ordination or decision-making except through the authority of her husband. Indeed, women are regarded as passive objects (receptors) rather than as active agents. This has serious implications for the ministry of women as it confirms that they exist only *for* their husbands and not for themselves, denying any opportunities for women to develop a sense of self-identity and self-worth. If women do not consider themselves to be of value then it is not surprising that women choose silence and indeed reinforce their own silence.

Another woman said that, ‘a married woman does not speak in public because it degrades the honour of her husband’ (I, 35, COS3CONF). Similarly, Dube observes that ‘a wife who speaks back, and tends to have a mind of her own, violates the honour of her husband’ (2007, 355). Where such cultural limitations apply, women cannot speak out in meetings; they are silenced by the honour due to their husbands. If this is the case, women cannot participate in decision-making, in strategic committees, in leading and in ordained ministry. Unless, they have the permission of

their husbands they should be silent, simply because they are married in a culture that expects them to be married.

Although marriage gives privileges to the husband because he gains power over all aspects of property, his wife increases her burdens. Marriage means taking on heavy responsibilities in domestic roles and in child bearing and rearing. Culturally, marriage imprisons women, together with their good ideas, in the home, under the control of men, and limits their outside activities. Women therefore have less time to devote to ministry.

Men's attitudes to women in marriage are indicated by a number of proverbs in Ethiopia which denigrate women; for example, 'a woman might give birth to a wise man, but is never wise herself' (Eshete, 2000, 24; Hussein 2004, 127). This perception directly affects women's participation in Church ministry by creating the expectation that women cannot be as effective as men, who by virtue of their gender will be better managers and decision-makers, making it more difficult for women to be selected for those roles.

5.2.6. Women's Domestic Role

Women's domestic roles provide important reasons for their absence from decision-making meetings because of their heavy responsibilities and because of their lack of control of finances, even of those which they themselves have earned. An undervaluing of their contribution to the family home psychologically undermines their confidence and sense of self worth, making it far more difficult for them to believe that they can lead, be ordained or make any kind of effective public contribution to ministry. Moreover, if they have a domestic role at home, it will seem natural to them and to men for them to continue a domestic role in the Church.

As we have seen in chapter three, a range of data from the fieldwork showed that family responsibility played a significant role in making it necessary for women to be absent from decision-making meetings. For example, a male respondent said, 'The heavy workloads and responsibility in the household prevent women from attending Church meetings regularly' (I, 35, COS2M). A woman also responded,

I am a member of executive meetings at both National and Regional levels. At the same time I am busy with domestic work and on the farm. Because of the culture there is an unequal division of labour within my family. My husband does not help me with the domestic work as he holds his own responsibility in a public role. I am really finding it a problem to fulfil my commitment to hold all these responsibilities (I, 35, COS7F).

In this example the husband followed the culture of not involving himself in 'women's' domestic work. According to Hurisa, this typically includes child rearing, looking after the whole family including the elderly, as well as the children, looking after cattle, fetching water from the river and collecting firewood (2006, 17, Almaz, 1995, 3). Abate also contends that women are expected to carry out the larger share of family and household responsibilities as their spouses do not usually share them (2006, 21).

The sheer amount of time spent by women in the fields as well as in the home, in comparison with men, demonstrates very powerfully the reason for their absence from meetings, particularly those at a distance from their homes; and the contrast with men's working hours is particularly instructive. Respondents repeatedly drew attention to women's additional and significant work outside the home, for example weeding and harvesting in the field (I, 35, COS7COF). During the farming seasons, women work 15 hours per day. In contrast, men, especially those in urban settings work for about 8 hours only (Hurisa, 2006, 12).

Additionally, although women are engaged in activities which are important to the well-being of the family and society at large, their contributions are not well recognised so that they continue to suffer from low self-esteem, which makes giving voice to their concerns more difficult (Nasimiyu-Wasilke, 1994, 35). For example, in the course of my fieldwork, I visited three families who have boys and girls. The husbands were civil servants but the three wives were just looking after the families. I asked one of the husbands whether his wife was employed anywhere like him. He told me that she does not have a job at all. He did not recognize her backbreaking domestic chores as work. This shows that women's contributions are unrecognised by their own family. It is possible that such women then find it difficult to believe that they are worthy of being valued or recognised in a public ministry. Whereas men may be involved in farming cash crops which give them access to cash resources and therefore to power, women's activities continue to be confined to the maintenance of

the household and subsistence farming. Although it is possible to speak of a division of labour between men and women in Ethiopian culture, since women work outside and inside the home the reality is not a fair division of labour. Hurisa therefore asks that if women work both inside and outside the home, where is the men's share of the division of labour (Hurisa, 2006, 13).

Neyengle, a Congolese scholar, argues that, 'the division of household work (and child care) is exploitive of women's services.... women do twice or three times more housework than their male counterparts' (2004, 42, see Almaz, 1998, 6, Ashana, 2004, 3). This is made worse when men do not even recognise the contribution made by women. Besha, a Tanzanian feminist theologian, identifies in her research how women suffer under heavy workloads based on discriminatory traditions (1996, 55-56). Women are always busy with domestic roles such as cooking, child bearing and rearing which take most of their time and energies but they are not credited for it. This is equally true of women in Ethiopia and lack of time is one of the reasons preventing them from participating in decision-making meetings as well as evangelism ministry.

Having considered the effect of women's domestic responsibilities on their ability to participate in EECMY decision-making meetings, I turn to consider the impact of the low levels of women's education on their capacity to be involved in all four areas of ministry under discussion at all levels.

5.2.7. Low level of education

The low level of women's education is another significant reason for their absence from all areas of public ministry. As one woman said, 'lack of education hinders many women from strategic positions and leadership in public' (I, 35, COS4CONF). Far fewer girls and young women than boys and young men receive an education in Ethiopia. This is clearly shown in the statistics for primary, secondary, and higher education referred to in the introduction to the thesis.

The exclusion of women from education begins at an early age. According to the questionnaire responses, girls do not have enough support from either the Church or their family. For example, a pastor said that, 'in our culture the family gives priority

to the boys' education rather than to girls because girls would marry and join another family' (I, 35, COS7M). He meant by this that fathers often plan to marry rather than to educate their daughters as they collect money from the marriage. Until they marry, the family merely want the girls to support them in the home by completing domestic chores which do not need skills. Abate confirms that although women contribute to the development of Church and society, the traditional place for Ethiopian women does not allow them to access education, rather it confines them to the home (2006, 11, see Dhunfa 2007, 53, Hile 2007, 12).

The reality of gender disparity in education within Ethiopia affirmed by Giorgis (2005, 6), is illustrated in the following story told by one of my female respondents.

At elementary school I went on a school trip with the other students without consulting my family. The trip was in the forest and climbing on the mountain. Culturally, a girl should not go to the forest unless it is with relatives. As I was a small girl I did not know about it at all. After the trip when I came home my father heard about the trip and decided to end my schooling (COS3FCON).

In her conversation, this woman continually mentioned that she received different treatment from her brothers. Her father decided to block her future while continuing to support his sons. She was not consulted about it but had to accept his decision. This woman was punished like many women in Ethiopia whose futures have been blocked. I myself experienced similar obstacles but I was rescued by the support of my elder brother. Nyengele throws light on these findings when he indicates how families marginalize their girls in the areas of education. He insists that 'the family is a place of gender subordination which functions to the disadvantage of women' (2004, 48). Abate argues further that, the important strategic activities like education, employment, and decision-making were taken as the duty of men whereas women's role was taken to be subservient (2006, 11).

If we learn that the low level of women's education is another significant reason for their absence from all areas of public ministry, then we should also ask why women have a low level of education. The answers given above are that girls are unimportant, that is, they are not as important as boys, and they are insignificant because they marry out of the family.

Theological Education

Some women cannot participate in leadership or ordained ministry in the EECMY because, although their call has been accepted, they cannot access theological education and training, which is a pre-requisite for ordination. However, Phiri suggests that, 'African women have been excluded from theological education' because it seemed to be reserved for those who are called to ordained ministry who were presumably men (1997, 74). This is also the case in the EECMY because as we have noted in the previous chapter the budget has not been allocated as promised and therefore women have not been trained like their male counterparts although they are allowed to be ordained. With regard to this example, a man told me that, 'we wish to have more women theologians but we do not have enough budget to train women' (COS7M-Pastor). The reason for this is simply that the women's budget has been spent on the men, or, if the budget has been cut, then it is the case that the education and training of men has been privileged. This last point is the significant one. Funds for theological education will always be scarce and the truth is that women have been relegated and men have been privileged.

The EECMY Theological Seminary graduation statistics alongside the funding statistics, confirm the privileging of male students and the unimportance of women. They show that from 1960-2007 a total of 951 students training as evangelists and for ordination graduated from both theology and leadership courses (from 1996-2005), yet in 1st Degree, Diploma and Certificate there were only 46 women (5 %). The behaviour of the EECMY towards women is culpable in that it passed a policy decision in 1993 granting women 33% of the total Church scholarship funds (14th General Assembly, 1993). Women then have been denied their rights for educational funding. Although decisions on women's education within Ethiopia have also been passed, since the Church and the local congregations do not allocate the money for women for maintenance it is difficult for women to undergo even within Ethiopia where the congregations do allocate money for men's training. Therefore the men have more opportunity to gain education and thence to occupy the strategic positions in the Church in decision-making, evangelism, and to become leaders and called to be ordained with the result that women are marginalised in these areas.

However, one of the problems is that yet again they do not implement the resolution fully and the amount allocated. For example, as the EECMY scholarship report of 2010 showed the 4 scholarship were given to study in the USA. All of these were allocated to men.

As we have seen those who are not educated generally and also in theology do not have the opportunity to represent the Church in decision-making and strategic planning. Women have found difficulties to access theological education. At both congregational and at national levels men are privileged but women need the permission to receive funds. This prevents women from gaining initial theological education from which a call to ordination might be followed.

We may then identify lack of general education here as deliberate silencing of women in society, lack of a theological education is based on a failure to value women equally with men, and also on the family's selfishness towards those who will marry out of their particular family.

My respondents repeatedly commented that women's lack of education is one of the issues which prevent women from accessing more advanced education and training for entry into the ministries of lay leadership and ordination. Moreover, to be able to compete for positions such as organising evangelistic ministry requires both theological training and secular education. Similarly, lack of access to theological education makes it difficult for women to fill a vacancy at the Department for Mission and Theology as it requires qualifications in Theology. Moreover, it also makes women's ordination almost impossible because ordained ministry requires persons versed in theology (14th & 17th General Assembly, 1997 & 1993). Many of my respondents commented on the low level of women's education and theological training which have minimized their participation in decision-making and rendered them silent (c.f. Hurisa, 2003, 16).

This is illustrated in the EECMY by giving of almost all scholarship opportunities at home and internationally to male candidates (EECMY scholarship committee, 2003). The EECMY carries some responsibility for the inferior provision of education for women having earlier passed a resolution to allocate 33% of the scholarship budget

to fund higher education for women (14th General Assembly 1993). Courses of significance to the EECMY are, for example, maths for accounting, health for development work, and theological education for lay leadership and ordination.

5.2.8. Low level of economic involvement

As a range of data from the fieldwork shows, lack of finance affects women's participation in, and increases their absence from, several decision-making meetings.

For example, a woman told me the following story,

One time I was invited to attend a workshop at the neighbouring Synod but since I had not enough money to make a pre-payment my place was taken by a man as he was financed by the parish' (I, 35, COS2CONF).

Although she was invited to the meeting, her lack of economic status forced her to be absent. The man was easily funded by the congregation and could attend the meeting, but she was not given the opportunity to be funded. This not only privileges men at the expense of women but it also assumes that women are unnecessary to the decision-making process of the Church. Through implication, this also communicates that women's contribution to decision-making is seen as less valuable than men's and that women are not considered capable of making wise decisions.

A further similar example was given by another woman. She said, 'although I am a full member of the Church Council I was told that there was no fund for me to go to the meeting' (COS5F). The reference here is to the National Council in Addis Ababa, which relative to journeys to other meetings would have been expensive. It is typical for men to receive funding rather than women, as in the previous example. Since she had no money, although she was eligible to receive it from the Church, she did not attend the meeting and therefore could not represent women nor participate in the decision-making process.

Another woman said 'a man and I applied for a senior job in the Church at the synod office. After our applications were reviewed, the synod provided a job for the man but my application was tabled for an unknown time' (I, 35, COS5F). Now, the synod office knew the General Assembly's policy decision which supports women's employment and says 'women are to be given priority for employment for full-time positions in the Church according to this percentage 25%-50%' (1993). Of course,

both of the applicants needed jobs but the woman was rejected and the man was readily selected and gained the job even though this synod was a long way from achieving its 25% target of employment for women. Neyengle is right to suggest that gender factors are clearly at work in the employment of women and men (2004, 51).

This incident shows that one of the reasons why women do not hold managerial posts is that the Church does not implement its policy decisions. However, as many researchers suggest, women do get clerical jobs rather than professional ones. Indeed, I observed that the EECMY Central Office at national level has many women cleaners and office typists but no women managers. The same is true within the wider society. For example, in Ethiopia, research shows that 98.21% of men work in occupations which need skills and knowledge whereas women are working in the lower positions and only 1.79% of them work in occupations which need skills and knowledge (Hurisa 2006, 27). All of this suggests that women are marginalized in senior decision-making roles because there is a gender bias against women performing these roles whereas the less public, low status menial roles are considered appropriate for women.

With few exceptions, the EECMY has consistently resisted the inclusion of women in ministry because of a deep-seated patriarchal culture. The latter permeates the life of society, influencing many EECMY families through their EOC origins, through their cultural traditions which define the roles of women and men so tightly, through the rites of passage which at best indoctrinate women with their subordinate role, and at worst abuse them and force them into a painful silence. The unfair distribution of domestic work not only silences women by its sheer quantity, preventing them from attending Church meetings, but also attempts to limit them to the private, domestic and low status environment. This, coupled with the serious failure of the Church to educate its women members, especially its potential women leaders and ordinands, makes the Church responsible and culpable for at least some of the silence of its women. The greatest obstacle to women's participation in ministry at every level is then not their lack of ability but rather a patriarchal structure informed as we have seen, by a patriarchal culture.

However, cultural reasons are not the only reasons for women's silence in decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination. As well as this, data from my fieldwork suggests a range of theological reasons which also serve to inform the legitimacy of women's silence in these four areas of ministry. The next section therefore turns to address this.

5.3. Theological reasons for women's silence in different ministries of the EECMY

In this section I argue that the silence of women on decision-making bodies, and in evangelism, leadership and ordination is caused in part by patriarchal understandings of a range of biblical texts and by a number of traditional patriarchal theological understandings of women which maintain that women are subordinate to men by the will of God and that they are not permitted to lead or to have authority over men. Patriarchy has prevailed throughout much of Christian history in most Christian traditions which have rigidly barred women from Church ministry.

As a Church from a Lutheran tradition the EECMY believes in the supreme authority of Scripture. The Constitution states, 'All Scripture both Old and New Testaments are inspired by God and are the most authoritative word of God in all matters of doctrine and conduct' (EECMY Constitution 2005, 17). Nevertheless, the fact is that the Bible has been used as an important tool for legitimising the marginalization of women in ministry in the EECMY. These arguments resonate quite significantly with objections to women's ministry which have been raised within western contexts. This resonance may reflect the influence of western theology and readings of the Bible on the EECMY's theology.

5.3.1. Women in Pauline epistles (1 Cor. 14: 34-5).

As a range of data showed, many respondents from the fieldwork indicated that there are difficulties about women's ministry in the Pauline epistles. For example, a pastor commented that 'the texts in Paul's epistles teach women's subordination to man and it forbids women even to speak in public worship; they can only listen' (COS4M)

(pastor). Additionally, a woman interviewee showed her knowledge of the problem when she asked ‘why is it that only women are told to be silent while men are not being told to do so?’ (COS2CONF). The text to which the interviewees referred is 1 Corinthians 14: 34-5 and the full text is quoted below:

Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (1Cor. 14: 34-35).

If the text is taken literally and not read in relation to other texts which contradict some of what it says, then it plainly commands (three times) that women should be silent in the church and that they should be subordinate to their husbands.

It is therefore common amongst EECMY members to understand the Bible as being against women’s participation in Church ministry (i.e. decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination), and this passage from Corinthians is often presented as evidence for this. Birri, for example, recognises that 1 Cor. 14: 34-35 is one of the difficult passages in the New Testament which is often quoted to justify the limited participation of women in the life of the church (1986, 30). He also indicates that the text has a range of difficulties relating to its correct position in the letter and its apparent contradiction with what Paul says in 1 Cor.11:5. Birri’s view was supported by a range of data from the fieldwork. For example, a male interviewee quoted the same text saying that ‘women are told to be silent in the church’ (COS3M). This might mean a number of different things: women should not speak in the church could mean preaching and teaching, leading and serving Holy Communion as well as participating in strategic positions in the church. It would then exclude women from all areas of ministry in the church.

In contrast another question raised by many women and men and represented in the following words of an interviewee were, ‘in 1 Cor. 11:5 women are allowed to pray and prophesy in public worship but not in 1 Cor. 14. Does Paul contradict himself?’ (COS3F). She meant that in one passage, women were commanded to be silent, while in the other they were permitted to preach. It was this issue which I noticed in my participant observations caused heated debate in a particular pastor’s empowerment workshop. The pastor from the local congregation asked ‘whether such contradictory texts are written by Paul or by another person’ (COS6M).

Scholars too have been concerned about the contradictory ideas from the same person and have wondered whether the passage is a real work of Paul. Thus, scholars such as Birri postulate that verses 34-35 are a later addition by post Pauline editors (Birri, 1986, 30). According to Birri, the scholars who argue for later interpolation base their case on the following three points: firstly, verses 34-5 are located after verse 40 in some western texts (Bruce, 1975, 565). Secondly this passage contradicts 1 Cor. 11: 5 where Paul allows women to participate in public worship as they were prophesying and praying (Birri, 1986, 30, c.f. Edwards, 1989, 69, Abdeta, 2003, 17). Wire writes, in referring to tongues, ‘speaking’, ‘praying’ ‘singing’, ‘praises’, ‘blessing’ and ‘thanking’ all indicate speaking (1995,140).

Since there are similarities between 1 Timothy 2:11-15 & 1 Cor. 14: 34-35 it is possible that verses 34 and 35 are an interpolation by the author of Timothy. Furthermore, Fiorenza observes that 1 Cor. 14: 33-36 is often understood to speak about women’s silence which contradicts 11: 5 since this latter verse ‘presupposes that women are pneumatics, and as such pray and prophesy within the worship of the community’ (1983, 230-31). Clearly those who wish to keep women silent have sided with the verses which support their case. I will respond to the text in chapter 6.

5. 3. 2. Women in Deutero-Pauline epistles (1 Timothy 2: 11-15)

Another text used as evidence against women’s participation in Church ministry (i.e. decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination) was 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Both men and women interviewees commented that this text presses for the subordination of women. For example, one woman referring to the text said, ‘since the subordination of women is rooted in it [1 Timothy 2: 11-14], it is difficult to accept women’s leadership as men must be head in church and society’ (COS7 CONF). According to her, proper understanding of the text is crucial because it appears to legitimize the silence of women in ministry and their exclusion from leadership and ordination. The text reads,

Let a woman be in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; And Adam was not deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

A male respondent, basing his argument on the above text said, ‘women may preach or teach but they cannot be ordained because they are forbidden to have authority over men according to 1 Timothy. Therefore, this should not be discussed in the Church’ (COS2M). Both respondents had understood that the text stated plainly that women were to be silent, under the authority of men and never to exercise authority over them. Interestingly, however, the male respondent acknowledged women’s participation in preaching and teaching but he strongly resisted women’s ordination.

Ruether suggests that, ‘the pathology seems to be even more violent not with women as preachers but women as priests’ (1983, 195). Ruether makes clear that for some, women’s inclusion in ordained ministry is harder to accept than their involvement in preaching. My data from questionnaires showed that respondents thought that ordained ministry is equal to other ministries which was supported by 57 men out of 83 (69%). (Q6, Ordination, (CONM). The text of course made no mention of ordination, yet the male respondent made a clear distinction between preaching and ordination and read into the text a prohibition on ordination for women.

At a workshop on women’s ordination which I observed, the debate was surrounded the negative attitude of the author to women’s ministry. The debate centred on three major issues: Firstly, that the text required complete submission and silence. Secondly, that it taught women’s inferiority to men because the woman was formed second and deceived first. Thirdly, the text limits salvation to those women who have experienced childbirth. The women were concerned that this text linked women’s salvation with childbirth because many women do not or cannot give birth.

I will consider the allusions to Genesis 2 and 3 in the present text when I discuss Genesis 2 and 3. Before discussing the allusion to the work of Martin Luther let me

introduce the relationship between the EECMY and the Lutheran Church. As I discussed in my Introduction to the Thesis, the EECMY has been influenced by the teaching of Lutheran missionaries and still works with the Lutheran missionaries from the west particularly, from Germany and Scandinavian countries as well as the USA (c.f. Bakke, 1987, 94-96). The EECMY then has links with the Lutheran

Church and with Lutheran traditions and its interpretation of the Bible in matters of faith and conduct.

Oduyoye observed Luther's opposition to the public ministry of women: 'it was...Martin Luther who declared that women were fit only to go to church, to work in kitchens, and to bear children' (2005, 5: c.f. Ruether, 1983, 97). Luther's teaching gave no place to women's ministry in public and 'deprived [them] of any share in the governance of public matters outside the home' (Soskice, 2003, 81-83, Wisner, 1996, 128) and this has probably strengthened the opposition to the ministry of women in the EECMY. Certainly, it is the case that many EECMY members seek to limit women's ministry to going to Church and serving the family. This may well have contributed to the absence of women from the four areas of women's ministry and the relegation of women to domestic work and bearing and rearing children. According to Luther's view, women's ability is only for menial services rather than participating in decision-making.

Many women in the EECMY have recognised that this Lutheran background has contributed to objections to women's ministry in the EECMY. One woman summed it up like this, 'it is Martin Luther who limited our [women's] ministry to childbirth and giving service to others' (COS2F).

5. 3.3. Genesis 2 and the order of creation

My respondents in the fieldwork, especially the men, selected four arguments from Genesis to legitimise the silence of women, especially in teaching, preaching and administration of the sacraments. The arguments were: 1) that man names woman, 2) that woman was made after the man, 3) that she is taken from the man and is therefore inferior to him 4) that she is man's helper.

The text is quoted below,

Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper as his partner...' (2:18). 'So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man' (2:21, 22).

A male respondent said that, 'since a woman was named by the man, she must be subordinate to him' (I, 35, COS5MCON). According to this view, men are eligible to

be heads or leaders and the women are not because Eve was named by the man Adam. From the comments of the respondents, naming may give an important position to the one who names. In Ethiopian culture, for example, naming is very important and shows the authority of the person. It is mainly exercised by the male who named to his children and also his domestic animals. Similarly Evans argues that naming in the Old Testament times reflects dominion, and that the man's naming of the woman is clear evidence of his God-given authority over her (Evans 1983, 16).

Similarly too, Senbet, an Ethiopian biblical scholar, in his presentation to one of the women's ordination workshops accepted the patriarchal reading. He said, 'woman was created in the image of God, Adam gave a name to her, in the same way as he named the animals' (1991, 6,). In this respect, he justifies his argument of women's subordination by referring to Genesis 2: 23. Interestingly he emphasises her subordination by linking the woman with the animals. A male respondent also commented that 'since the woman was taken from man's rib she must be subordinate and inferior to him' (COS4). My respondent based his case on Genesis 2 and thereby accepting the subordination of woman to man as the passage suggests that the woman was taken from a rib of the man Adam (Gen. 2: 21ff.).

Thomas Aquinas, in his interpretation of Genesis 2 already seems to be influenced by the Fall when he says 'for the woman was made from the crooked rib which is bent in a contrary against the direction from the man. Woman conspired constantly against spiritual good' (Ruether, 2001, 138). Aquinas's view seems to show that even from creation women is morally inferior to man, legitimising her silence.

Finally, another male respondent sought to justify the exclusion of women from public ministry by reference to Gen 2:20 saying that 'man is created first but the woman is second to be the helper of Adam. For this reason women cannot be recommended for Church leadership' (COS2M). The interviewee understood the reference to second to suggest 'secondary' in the sense of less important and helper was understood in the same way. This understanding was supported by the teachings of Augustine who said '... the woman is in a state of subjugation in the original order of things. For this reason she cannot represent headship in society or in the church' (in Ruether, 2001, 138). Since the EECMY needs to be faithful to the teaching of the

church fathers the theologically educated men place great authority on the church fathers and use their writings as a strong argument for women's subordinate role and, lacking the necessary authority for leadership and ordination. The arguments surrounding Genesis 2 claim the inferiority and subordination of women to men and the need to restrict their public ministry. In the next section we shall see the fall as a reason for excluding women from ministry

5.3.4. Genesis 3, the fall

Data from my fieldwork suggests that women are more closely linked with the fall than men. For example, a man argued that 'woman was accused for the account of the fall and is presented as the weaker partner and temptress' (Gen. 3:16) (COS6M). According to the male respondent above, the woman was accused of bringing sin into the world and this together with her weakness is legitimate grounds for women's subordination within the Church.

One of the interviews suggests that it is the influence of the church Fathers, and especially Augustine, that EECMY members note. Many of them note that EECMY members say that 'women' cannot do such work which could mean women are mentally weak. As Ruether observes Augustine made his case on the weakness of Eve by saying that '... the serpent ... first approached Eve, because as a woman she had less rationality and self-control and was close to the "lower" part of the female part of the soul; hence she was more easily deceived' (Ruether, 2007, 53-54; c.f. Lloyd, 1996, 92). Augustine understood women as weaker and the fact is that the serpent approaches her and not the man. One reason for women's silence in Ministry then is the influence of western theology specifically the church fathers on the EECMY.

5.3.5. The maleness of God

There was some barely articulated suggestion by one male interviewee that women ought not to be ordained because they could not represent the maleness of God. He said, 'Kes' in Gee'z (priest) is a title only for the male priest which can be assumed as equal with a male God' (COS3COM). As there is no female equivalent to kes, then a woman should not be ordained, because there is no word for her. His argument

seemed to be that there is no title for women pastors yet and if they use the same name they are called by the male gender. Therefore, the logic was that until a proper title was found for women pastors in the EECMY women should not continue to be ordained.

5.3.6. The absence of women among the twelve disciples

A range of data from interviews and my own observations suggest that the absence of women from the lists of the disciples is a major reason for preventing women from participating in ordination. One interviewee suggested that ‘since women were not included in the twelve disciples how could the Church ordain them in order to represent Christ?’ (COS5COF). A key feature of ordained ministry for some people is for the priest to be able to represent Christ, specifically in presiding at the Eucharist. Furthermore, the above respondent expressed his feeling that women cannot serve the Eucharist/Holy Communion as they were not among the twelve disciples. This was presented as a theological reason to prevent women from ordination within the EECMY which was widely discussed for twenty years before the ordination of women in the EECMY in order to make awareness to the members (c.f. Nagassa, 1998, 12, Kasmu, 2010, 128). Another man said, ‘since women were not included in leadership during Jesus’ time, there is no reason to suggest them for the current church leadership’ (COS2CONM). There seems to be an argument here that women are simply not needed

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that both cultural and theological influences create barriers that have the effect of silencing women in decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination in the EECMY. Initially, the silencing of women by the patriarchal culture has forced women to accept the decisions that have been made by others. For example, girls’ circumcision and marriage are very often decided by the parents. Since women are not allowed to make their own decisions, this has forced them to depend on others. Thus, such experience has minimised the development of women’s participation in decision-making meetings and also excluded them from strategic planning.

Another reason for the silence of women has been the EOC. This influence has impacted on women's participation in ordination because of fears about loss of blood, impurity and uncleanness which in their view might contaminate the church or the people. A further reason for women's marginalisation from decision-making has been their lack of personal economic status which has prevented them from attending meetings. The Church that should have funded them has considered men to be more important and the women themselves have no funds because these are all under the control of the husband. I have shown how women's lack of general education and of theological education has severely limited their access to initial education and training for lay leadership. The lack of scholarship funds for women has also adversely affected their progression to positions of strategic leadership and decision making, and also to ordained ministry in the EECMY.

I have argued that there have been a number of fundamental biblical texts with particular authority for this Lutheran church that have been used to attempt to silence women in public ministry, particularly in assuming positions of authority over men. These have included the commands for women to be silent and submissive in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; the command not to teach or have authority over men, but rather hold to a domestic role, supported by Luther.

I have also explained how texts in Genesis 2 about the authority of the man in naming, and of the weakness of the woman in coming out of man and being a helper, both together suggested that man is the model for leadership, ordination, decision and policy-making, whereas the subservient and weak woman can be confined to domestic duties in the home. The Fall has in the eyes of some, sealed women's fate as the one who disobeyed, led Adam into sin, and been punished by pain in childbirth, so that she is no longer fit to lead others. Finally the maleness of God and the maleness of the disciples provide paradigms of maleness as the key and model of how lay leaders and ordained ministers should be. The absence of women from the twelve disciples, has been used to reinforce male authority and leadership in home and Church and more importantly to exclude women from positions of leadership and from ordination, because of perceptions that women must remain subordinate to men, cannot represent God or Christ at Eucharist and were not chosen by Christ to be in the close circle of the twelve disciples.

If the ministry of women in the EECMY is compromised because of these cultural and theological reasons, how should the Church respond? What practical measures might be put in place to transform the status quo, to challenge cultural barriers and theological arguments used to secure women's subordination in relation to these four areas of ministry? In seeking to address these questions, the next chapter argues that there are more fundamental and paradigmatic biblical texts which must be studied and which can present a vision of liberation for women and others that can open up the constraints of the oppressive texts considered in this chapter to affirm the role of women in the ministries of decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination. Thus, the chapter argued and considered some workable strategies for change for women and men in the EECMY.

Chapter-6

Theological and Practical Responses to the Silence of Women in Ministry

6.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a theological and practical response to the ways in which, and the reasons why, women are silenced within the four areas of decision-making, policy making in evangelism, lay leadership and ordination in ministry in the EECMY, as identified in the three previous chapters. More specifically, this chapter responds to the cultural and theological barriers identified in chapter 5. Responding to these barriers is a huge task. Given their immensity I am not suggesting that implementation of the suggestions made in this chapter will somehow “solve” the problems presented by these various cultural and theological barriers. I am, however, proposing that they may improve the situation and lessen the impact of the problems in different localities where the suggestions are implemented.

What I am wanting to do in this chapter is first to provide a theological response by identifying liberative texts which themselves challenge the theological barriers against women’s ministry and then secondly, re-interpret oppressive texts through the lens of some of the liberative texts which might challenge these patriarchal theological discourses and which might, as a result, also help the EECMY to challenge cultural discourses (given its holistic approach to ministry). This section is primarily concerned with a discussion of the Bible because firstly, this is the basis on which women are excluded and secondly, due to this, and given the EECMY’s evangelical tradition, this has to be part of the solution.

I discuss liberative texts such as Galatians 3:28 and Genesis 1:27 beginning from the experience of women in the EECMY who identified them as being supportive of the full participation of women in ministry. I then consider other possible resources for liberative texts before noting the ways in which they have been critiqued by African women and feminist scholars in order to further develop my own response to these texts. I will use feminist scholars because, as Birri has already shown in his work, many of the arguments used against women resonate with arguments used against women’s ministry in the West. They, therefore, reflect the same influence of Western theology and so demand some degree of engagement with Western feminist scholarship. I will consider the implications of these texts for women’s role and

status in ministry in the EECMY, particularly in the four areas of ministry, decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination.

I then discuss oppressive texts, for example, 1 Cor. 14:33, 34 and 1 Tim. 2:5-11, and sections of Genesis 2 and 3. My concern here is to consider whether, and if so how, these challenge interpretations discussed in the last chapter and whether women are already starting to forge their own counter-patriarchal interpretations of the text. I identify other resources that might be used to challenge oppressive texts and then critique these texts by reference to African women theologians and western feminist theologians. This work on identifying liberative texts and re-interpreting oppressive texts, I want to suggest, establishes the grounds for real change within the EECMY.

Secondly, in this chapter, I suggest a practical response to the marginalization of women in ministry in the EECMY. This practical response argues that the texts and readings already discussed call for the development of certain principles and practices. I, therefore, identify and discuss the principles of conscientization, capacity building, partnership and theological education, and explain how they apply both to the cultural barriers identified in Chapter 5 and to the relevant areas of ministry discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

I then need to identify practical strategies for the implementation of the principles such as the development of women-only groups, workshops and Bible study groups for specific target groups. These practical strategies have a clear purpose: to gain the necessary confidence, knowledge and skills for challenging the cultural and theological barriers against the ministry of women in the four areas, and for giving further impetus to the long journey towards the liberation and equality of women in ministry, and in the wider culture. They will build on the practical strategies that are already being used within the EECMY's holistic ministry, particularly in development and healthcare.

I will propose a particular method of Bible study that starts from women's experience and consists of re-reading and, for those who are illiterate, re-telling and reinterpreting Bible passages and stories in conversation with experience in order to

develop a vision of liberation. It is to some of those liberating texts, identified by women in the fieldwork, to which I now turn.

6.2. Identifying Liberating texts

As Chapter 5 has shown, the Bible is an important tool used by those within the EECMY to support the silence of women in the four areas of ministry. Given that this is the case, it is imperative that a theological response engages meaningfully with the Bible and asks how the Bible might be used to inform a theological response to women's silence. In the light of this, this section suggests that there are liberative texts within the Bible which provide an alternative counter-patriarchal narrative about the role and status of women in ministry and which, therefore, must be heard. It begins by identifying and exploring the liberative texts which are already being used and discussed by women in the EECMY, such as Gal. 3:28 and Gen. 1:26-28, and then moves on to consider other texts which might supplement these, such as women in the Jesus movement, including the story of Mary (Jn. 20:1-11); the woman of Samaria (Jn. 4:1-42); the Syrophoenician Woman (Mk. 7:24-30) and the anointing of Jesus (Mark 14:1-9). The implications such texts raise for women in the four areas of ministry identified in chapters 3-5 will be a central concern. Let us for now begin by addressing texts which are used by women in the EECMY to challenge and critique the silence of women in ministry. I start here with a discussion of Gal. 3:28 since this is identified as perhaps the most important liberative text by women in the EECMY.

6.2.1. Gal. 3: 28

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

A number of women whom I interviewed for my fieldwork had discovered that Gal. 3: 28 is a liberating text which conveys that salvation through Christ includes all baptised persons, women and men. For example, one woman commented, 'I know by heart what Gal. 3: 28 says; it declares that all of us are one in Christ' (I, 35, COS6CONF). Having accepted what the text said, she seems to suggest that the passage challenges practices of exclusion and in some way supports the principles and practice of inclusion. However, it is not clear whether she is speaking only of

women or of men and women. Neither does she explain what she understands by ‘one in Christ’. Another woman told me that:

I shared a story about Gal. 3: 28 which I heard while I was in my local Church. The preacher presented on Gal. 3: 28 which says ‘there is no distinction in Christ Jesus’. Since then I have realised that both men and women are equal before God without any distinction. The story helped me to think and speak as a liberated woman rather than keep quiet in church meetings because the text always gives me freedom (COS2COF).

The above woman was illiterate, but she knew the text by heart and she experienced it in her life. In her case, she spoke of this verse freeing her both to think in a liberated way and to speak as a liberated woman in her local church meeting where decisions are made that affect the congregation. She had understood from the text that women together with men can involve themselves in decision-making meetings in order to serve Christ.

This kind of experience is also noted by Birri who suggests that ‘...Gal. 3: 28 has been singled out more than any other passage in the new Testament in support of the full participation of women in the life and ministry of the Church’ (1987, 46; c.f. Birri, 2010, 4; Said, 2006, 18; Dunfa, 2006, 13). According to Birri, the text is powerful in giving freedom to women who have experienced subordination in church and society. He writes,

The main focus is on the baptismal theology of Galatians 3:27-28 which underscores the equality of social relationships for all believers in Christ and affirms the overcoming of limited specific cultural roles and religious laws as a consequence of membership in the Body of Christ. Galatians 3:28 is not limited to its soteriological (salvific) implication but includes implications for ministry (2010, 4).

Birri put his emphasis on both the practical and spiritual implications of the verse. In a similar way, Oduyoye writes that Gal. 3: 28 is a declaration of a new humanity for women who have experienced exclusion on the basis of their gender. She argues that ‘our baptism compels us to see ourselves as the beginning of a new humanity modelled after Christ... we are baptised into Christ as persons, irrespective of our social status’ (1995, 137). For Oduyoye, Gal. 3: 28 is a kind of announcement which declares the full humanity of women in Christ, affecting not only their spiritual life but also their relationships and status as human beings in ministry in the Church and also in the wider social relationships of home, family and ethnic group. She implies that women can point to this verse and insist on being included in decision-making meetings and in having the right to speak equally with men. The woman whom I quoted earlier had indeed understood the verse.

Fiorenza connects Gal. 3: 28 with Jewish tradition by saying that the origin of the wording of Gal. 3: 28 may have been influenced by a rabbinic prayer, ‘a Jewish man thanked God that he did not create him a gentile, a slave, or a woman’ (Fiorenza 1983, 217, see, Birri, 19987, 47; Dunn, 1993, 204). Since these rabbinic prayers were already known by Jews who converted to Christianity, Paul may have been attempting to reject and transform this rabbinic tradition (Fiorenza, 1984, 217). In so doing, he was arguably suggesting that women could thank God that they *are* created women and that this in itself is a cause of celebration.

We have seen so far that Gal. 3: 28 teaches equality for humankind in both social and spiritual spheres through Christ. However, there is a debate, as indicated in the literature review, on the implications of Gal.3: 28 between those holding egalitarian and those holding complementarian views about whether the text includes the equality of women with men in both social as well as spiritual life. For example, Schemm, a complementarian, argues that Gal. 3: 28 affirms that all humans have equal access to salvation in Christ but men and women must have different roles in their social lives. Schemm says: ‘In short, Gal. 3: 28 is a soteriological statement, not a gender-role statement’ (2003, 28). According to the complementarian view, women must have different roles from those of men because the women complement men. However, women’s experience is that men choose the most valued roles, that is, the public roles of authority and power and the pretence of balance indicated by complementarity means that women’s relegation to more domestic/private and subordinate roles is justified.

In seeking to oppose these kinds of readings of the text, it seems crucial to draw attention to the way that Gal. 3: 28 subverts and challenges (either directly or indirectly, explicitly or inexplicitly) *all* patterns of relationship which attribute value on the basis of gender. Fiorenza, for example, argues that Gal. 3: 28 ends religious and cultural control and domination based on sexual divisions:

Sexual dimorphism and strictly defined gender roles are products of a patriarchal culture, which maintain and legitimise structures of control and domination – the exploitation of women by men. Gal. 3: 28 not only advocates the abolition of religious-cultural divisions and of the domination and exploitation wrought by institutional slavery but also of domination based on sexual divisions. It repeats with different categories and words that within the Christian community no structures of dominance

can be tolerated. Gal. 3: 28 is therefore best understood as a communal self-definition (1995, 213).

Gal. 3: 28 is, therefore, a key text to help women in the EECMY to affirm themselves as fully human 'within Christ' and to work out the implications of this. It means, for example, that women are equally eligible for, and capable of, making important decisions and holding managerial positions. It means that they too have authority to exercise valued and public roles, for example, representing Christ in ordination and preaching from the pulpit in Sunday worship.

Women in my study have already identified Gal. 3: 28 as a text which liberates women from silence, voicelessness and any barriers which have been used to silence them in Church ministry. The text is strongly supportive of women's inclusion in both lay leadership and ordination because through baptism women enter into Christ, and are redeemed by Christ who calls them to represent him at the Eucharist and in preaching the Word of God. Paul explicitly expressed this view in the text: 'There is neither... male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). Gal. 3: 28 can, therefore, be claimed by women in order to defend themselves from all the patriarchal barriers that marginalize them in their ministry.

6.2.3. Genesis 1: 27

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1: 27 is another liberating text which women in the fieldwork identified. For example, a woman representative told me about hearing the creation story: 'I listened to a preacher who was preaching on Genesis 1: 27. He said men and women are created in the image of God and saved by Christ' (COS6CONF). The woman discovered that men and women are equally created in the image of God and that there should not be any difference in role or status on the basis of gender. Another woman said, 'In Gen. 1: 26, men and women are created in the image of God and were given authority equally to have control over the universe' (COS7F). Yet another said, 'Gen. 1: 26 assures women that both women and men are created in the image of God. Thus, dominating women is against the order of creation and God's intention for humankind' (COS2CONF). The truth about women and men equally having dominion over the earth, rather than men having dominion over women, is a vital

truth for women in ministry to recognize. As they enter into it, they can respond to those men who say that women cannot preach because they are subordinate to men, or that they cannot be ordained because they are not allowed to have authority.

Birri claims that 'Genesis 1: 26-27 gives us the ideal situation of humankind in the beginning of creation' (1987, 53). Dunfa supports this view and indicates that in Gen. 1: 27-28 both men and women received collective blessing and responsibility directly from God without any reference to the superiority of the one over the other (2006, 11). According to Dunfa, men and women have been given equal responsibility to govern the universe. This means the intention of Gen. 1: 27 is mutuality and reciprocity rather than superiority and inferiority.

African women theologians have also taken seriously this text about being created in the image of God. Oduyoye insists that Gen. 1: 26f affirms 'for women the equal value of all human beings and assists in facing the challenge' (2001, 69). That is, the challenge of patriarchy. The central focus of Oduyoye lies in the humanity that women received through their creation in the image of God. If it is humanity that is made in God's image, and women are human, then the *imago dei* calls us to value and respect this image and to, therefore, value and respect women as fully made in that image. This then clearly provides a strong voice of challenge to practices which contravene the *humanity* of women such as abuse, rape violence and FMG, and because their workload and lack of valuing makes them feel like slaves and mere property.

Genesis 1:27 is also quoted by many feminist theologians because it confirms that men and women are created in the image of God. For example, Bellis argues that in Gen. 1: 27 she found that 'the two genders are equal...' (2007, 37, c.f. 46). She argues that both male and female possessed the image of God equally without any distinction. Although equality can be interpreted in various ways, Bellis is not here suggesting that women are the same as men but that women and men in all their diversity are equal to one another. Kuanrong agrees, arguing that in this description, 'there is no first or last. Male and female were also equal in the work God entrusted to them; there was no difference in their work, nor any allocation of power. Instead God instructed them to work together' (2000, 42-43). Kuanrong seems to be

implying here an end to differentiated gender roles. If this is so, then women will not be relegated to the subordinate, private and domestic spheres, but rather, may equally, with men, have roles where they exercise leadership and management. However, in her attempts to emphasise equality, she does not attend to questions of sameness and diversity.

Let me attend further then to these questions of sameness and diversity in these passages where male and female are 'one' in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28) and are created in the 'image of God' (Gen. 1: 26). Tribble notes connotations of unity rather than of sameness in the Genesis text and also significant differentiation between male and female (1992, 18). She understands that 'unity embraces sexual differentiation; it does not impose sexual identicalness. [*sic*] It recognises 'distinction within harmony'' (1992, 18). Tribble also notices what the text and surrounding verses do not do; they do not identify set 'roles, characteristics, attitudes or emotions' (1992, 19). If the distinction is there, then what does it mean? Green, in reflecting on 'the image of God' in representing Christ at the Eucharist, emphasises the imaging of the divine within the feminine. This imaging, she implies, comes through the same tasks or roles, for example, of presidency, but performed in a different way, or by the fact of being a woman presenting in a different way. For example, she suggests connotations in women's presidency of hospitality and of nurturing (Green, 2009, 48). If we look again at Gal. 3: 28, we can relate 'one in Christ Jesus' to 'the body of Christ' in 1 Cor. 12 and to the emphasis on unity in diversity in that chapter.

We may ask then what this means for women in ministry in the EECMY as they work out theses liberative texts in their ministries? Perhaps it will mean performing the same roles as men, the publicly valued authoritative roles, but fulfilling them in a different way, learning to do them in a feminine way. Reflections from Western feminist clergy women, referred to in the literature review, suggest that women's leadership is more relational, more collaborative and less hierarchical (Martin, 1996, 76; Baisley, 1996, 108). It is for women in ministry in the EECMY to work these out in an Ethiopian way.

6.3.3. 1 Corinthians 11: 5

But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head
— it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved.

Many women whom I interviewed for the fieldwork identified 1Cor. 11: 5 as a liberative text which spoke of women praying and prophesying in worship. One woman representative told me, ‘I heard from a friend of mine who told her story from 1 Cor.11: 5 where women were allowed to pray and prophesy’ (COS3CONF). The above woman heard the story from another woman although she had not read the Bible herself because she was not educated. It was a text that her friend identified as a liberating text. Women in the EECMY then consider that 1 Cor.11 allows women to participate in public ministry. Birri also writes that Paul ‘fully recognised women’s right to participate in public worship by praying and prophesying’ (1987, 28; c.f. Dunfa, 2006, 23; Said, 2006, 12). This text is particularly appropriate for women lay leaders and ordained leaders. Its context is public worship and these women should be encouraged by it to challenge those who would exclude them from an equal share in the ministry of the Word and public prayer and to exercise their calling and gift.

6.3.4. Women in the Jesus movement

Gospel stories about women can be powerful incentives and challenges for women in ministry in the EECMY to imitate their courage and initiative. One woman who represented other respondents revealed remarkable knowledge of such stories when she commented, ‘there were women within the Jesus movement but their histories were untold. Women need to uncover such stories’ (I, 35, COS6CONF). A male respondent also commented more generally that, ‘Christian men and women should struggle to recover the texts which give voice to women’ (COS1M). Women were fully involved in the Jesus movement and were part of a discipleship of equals. This is exemplified in the story of the Syrophenician woman who challenged Jesus to heal her daughter (Mk. 7:24-30, Matt. 15:21-28).

According to Jewish tradition women are not allowed to speak to a man in public. Yet, the fieldwork revealed many women who knew the story about this woman who challenged and broke through the tradition of the time. For example, one woman said, ‘it was a woman who persuaded Jesus for healing ministry’ (COS6F). Another

woman told me, 'I know a story which I always remember in my life. It is about the story of a woman who continually spoke to Jesus for a long time until she received her request which was healing for her daughter' (COS2F).

Fiorenza argues that the Syrophoenician woman expected liberation from Jesus and she received it directly from him (1983, 138). Her claim was beyond the boundary because she was a Gentile woman and she also went beyond what her gender and ethnicity allowed according to the patriarchal culture of the time. This needs to be shared as a good example for women in the EECMY to speak out boldly and to claim their God-given equality and persistently challenge an oppressive culture that would exclude them from it. Using examples referred to in chapters 3 to 5, let me suggest that women who have been elected as representatives should, like the Syrophoenician woman, break with cultural etiquette and persist in claiming their right to being supported in order to attend meetings. Those who are not included on the preaching rota need to find a voice to challenge these omissions and claim the same rights as men to exercise a preaching ministry that is currently being denied. The one who was not considered for a management post must resist cultural perceptions of women's passivity and challenge the interviewers to give her detailed feedback and request professional development in order to be successful next time.

Another powerful story is that of the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:1-42). Neither she nor the Syrophoenician woman were bound by geographical areas or gender. Neither of them were Jews and as women they were subject to the customs of the time which did not allow women to talk with a man. Nevertheless, one challenged Jesus' apparent unwillingness to heal her daughter and the other became a follower. Indeed, the Samaritan woman became an evangelist, but, even so, their names are not known to us. One of the interviewees recognised that the Samaritan woman was an evangelist and also understood the implication of her story for women's ministry in the EECMY. She said, 'women are called to speak out the good news like the Samaritan woman. The church must allow them to serve like Jesus did to the Samaritan woman' (COS5M).

The significance of these two stories for women in ministry in the EECMY is the women's willingness to challenge the conventions of their day in order to achieve

their aims and Jesus' acceptance and commendation of their approach. This is particularly the case for the Syrophoenician woman who not only initiates the conversation with Jesus, but also refuses to be silenced and challenges his first response. The Samaritan woman challenges women in ministry to hold sustained conversations with men, and to continue to ask questions until answers are given. She shows that women can witness to men and lead men to Christ.

A further story about women disciples of Jesus is that of Mary at the resurrection (Jn. 20:10-18). A woman interviewee knew this story and perhaps realised something of its significance when she said, 'Jesus appeared to Mary at the resurrection and sent her out. She represented Jesus and was sent out to tell the good news to the disciples' (COS3F). Another woman said something similar, 'Mary was the first woman to see Jesus' resurrection and she was sent by Jesus to speak the good news to the male disciples' (COS3CONF). The story is significant in privileging a woman to be an apostle, not to other women (as so often happens), but to men. In acting in this way, Jesus showed His equal acceptance and expectation of women while also confirming their public responsibility as ministers of the Gospel. The passage has significant implications for endorsing women's public role in preaching and in having authority over men. It shows that women can be commissioned to hold public roles and to exercise significant responsibility in situations where men are dependent on them.

Fiorenza pursues this same theme of the faithfulness and authority of women in ministry in her book *In Memory of Her* with reference to some remarkable stories of men and woman in Mark's gospel (which contains the history of Peter who denied Jesus and Judas who betrayed him). These stories, Fiorenza argues, have been officially reported but the story of the woman who anointed Jesus is 'virtually forgotten... Even her name is lost to us' (1983, xiii). Yet, she shows that in contrast to men, women are faithful in their discipleship. These verses and Fiorenza's assessment challenge women in ministry in the EECMY to value and celebrate the *ordinariness* of faithfulness as something *extraordinary*. If male disciples could not stay awake, could not accompany Jesus to the cross, but rather arrogated themselves to high positions in the Kingdom, then ordinary faithfulness in the context of 15 hours of daily work (as reported by an interviewee) deserves to be celebrated among

women and publicly in meetings with men. Women in the EECMY should celebrate the *extraordinary* contributions to ministry that arise out of their daily lives.

In the story of the anointing of Jesus (Mk. 14:1-9) there is a certain ambivalence for the woman is not named and she is shown performing an anointing, which is a menial task. Yet, as Barton shows, she is in fact combining two significant actions; first, she parallels Simon Peter's confession "you are the Christ – the Anointed One", but in womanly fashion [silently, symbolically] and in accord with active discipleship (one who *does the will* of God), *she says nothing, but instead acts*- she anoints his head (Messianic) – a significant *authoritative* (prophetic) action. Second, her action is one of self-giving *service* – an action which brings rejection from others – the (male) disciples and is in contrast with the response of Jesus. Like true disciples she models Christ in self-giving love that brings rejection. Yet He, Jesus, gives voice to the immense value that He places on her act of service and compassion (Barton, 1991, 232). Further, the woman has also shown insight and discernment into the forthcoming passion of Jesus and into his Messiahship, which the male disciples lack. The passage then may indicate that women are certainly not to be disassociated from these characteristics because it is a woman (and not a man) who in this instance recognises who Jesus *really* is.

The reasons for not naming the woman who anointed Jesus relate to the New Testament culture, with which Ethiopian women can easily identify for both are deeply patriarchal. This is recognised by one woman who referred to the 'woman who served Jesus by anointing him with a precious perfume although she was so quiet due to the cultural reasons of the time' (COS4COF). However, in contrast to focussing on her silence, women in ministry in the EECMY need to identify more with her gifts of insight and discernment, prophetic authority and confession of Christ in her symbolic act paralleling that of Simon Peter. This means that women in ministry in the EECMY can point to this woman and argue from her case that women do have the capacity to hold positions of authority and leadership and to contribute in significant ways to meetings.

6.3.5. Women in the early church

Further liberative texts which are not used by women in the EECMY and so have not been discussed so far, but which also serve to challenge patriarchal theology, are found in references to women in Paul's letters. In particular, they occur in his greetings to leaders of the different Christian congregations in Rome at the end of his letter to the Romans. According to Birri (1987, 39, there were many women such as Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Julia, Euodia and Syntyche (Rom. 16:1, 2, 6, 7 12, 15; Phil. 4:2-3;; Naharro, 2002, 82), who were preachers, teachers and evangelists in the early church community. Phoebe, who was deaconess at the church of Cenchreae, received an official recommendation from Paul (Rom. 16:2; Birri, 1987, 39; Ziesler, 1989, 349f). Furthermore, Priscilla was named ahead of her husband Aquila by Paul in his letters and by Luke in Acts, although the reason for this is unknown. Reading these texts and then reflecting on them in the light of their experience will help women in the EECMY to see that, just as women in the New Testament had roles as leaders of churches, so they too can and should be called to roles carrying responsibility in and for churches in the EECMY.

These biblical stories of women in the New Testament are paradigmatic for women in the EECMY for understanding how they should exercise their ministries based on their own experiences. When they read these stories they can claim that women too are the agents in biblical stories. They have to learn to see their own experiences through women's stories in the Bible in order to claim their heritage as normative (Isherwood, 2001, 93). As we have seen, this work has begun. Women in my study told biblical stories and, through dialogue with their experience, they began to find their own place and to recover many texts whose positive interpretations for women had been neglected. In so doing they are learning that there are alternatives to the oppressive texts and that these alternatives can be identified to give women a vision of what they can achieve in decision-making, evangelism, leadership and ordination.

Having seen that women in my study have realised that there are some liberative texts that can help women to interpret the stories of the Bible through their own experience and having critiqued them with other theologians from Ethiopia, Africa and the West, I will show in this section, through the fieldwork, how women in the

EECMY have tried to use some of the liberative texts for re-interpreting texts which oppress women.

6.3. Reinterpreting patriarchal/oppressive texts

Three texts were identified in the last chapter as texts which (according to many involved in my study) support the marginalization of women in ministry in the EECMY. These were: 1 Cor. 14:34-36, 1 Tim. 2:11-15 and Gen. 2 and 3. I intend to use three liberative texts, also identified in the previous chapter, Gal. 3: 28, Gen. 1: 27 and 1 Cor. 11:5 as three separate lenses to reinterpret the patriarchal and oppressive texts. In doing this, I am following the practice of both feminist scholars and, in some cases, of evangelical scholars who are not feminists, for example, in the case of Gal. 3: 28 FF Bruce comments that Gal. 3: 28: is used to interpret other texts. He says of this text, 'Paul states the basic principle here; if restrictions on it are found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, as in 1 Cor. 14:34f or 1 Tim. 2:11ff they are to be understood in relation to Gal. 3:28, and not vice versa' (1982, 190). Similarly Gen 1:26-28 is frequently used to reinterpret Gen. 2 and 3, and 1 Cor. 11:5 is used to reinterpret 1 Cor. 14:34-36. In addition, in this section, I will make reference to theological arguments against women's ministry based on the maleness of Jesus and on the absence of women from the 12 disciples of Jesus. However, before I begin with a reinterpretation of 1 Cor. 14: 34-5, I need to explain further my use of the liberative texts.

I intend to use all three liberative texts but not all to the same extent. I will use Gal. 3: 28 as a lens for reading all of the oppressive texts because it is a generic, paradigmatic statement about the implications of baptism into Christ, of new life in Christ, originally written to address the breaking down of all significant relational divisions known in the Roman world. Those divisions are referred to elsewhere in Paul's letters as significant barriers and sources of oppression (c.f. 1 Cor. 7:8-24; 12:12f; Eph. 2:14-18), which is another reason for the appropriateness of the text for this context. The accomplishment in Christ was to make all one, that is, one body in Christ, belonging to one another in Christ, and all using their gifts for Christ in the service of one another in a context of interdependence and mutuality. For Paul, this

was a description of a new humanity in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:28). I can therefore use Gal. 3:28 in a counter-patriarchal way to read all three oppressive texts.

Gen. 1:27 also has significant connotations of unity and mutuality. *Ha adham* is created in the image of God, but the same *ha adham* is then described as male and female, a unity in diversity. The surrounding verses give both male and female authority and dominion over creation, but not over each other and they are both blessed in their fruitfulness. In that 1 Cor. 11:5, 1 Cor. 14:34-36 and Gen. 2 and 3 all refer back to the created order, Gen. 1:27 is a helpful lens through which to read the other three texts.

Unlike Gal. 3:28 and Gen. 1:27, Cor. 11:5 has a much narrower relevance with respect to 1 Cor. 14:34-36 below. I will, therefore, discuss 1 Cor. 11:5 as a lens within that section.

6.3.1. Women should be silent 1 Cor. 14: 34-35

Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home.

Some of the interviews with women showed that they have already begun to interpret oppressive texts in the Bible through the lens of one or more of the liberative texts. For example, one woman said that ‘although 1Cor.14: 34-35 says that women should keep quiet, women have realised that 1 Cor. 11: 5 allows them to pray and prophesy (COS4CONF). Another woman supported this view by saying, ‘a woman retold the story that she had heard from a woman who listened to sermons and had heard two different stories. One day she listened to a preacher who preached on 1Cor. 14 and delivered a message on women’s silence but she also listened to another sermon from the same letter of Paul which encouraged women’s ministry of praying and prophecy’ (1Cor. 11: 5) (COS6COF). By listening to stories from sermons, through Bible study and through conversations with other women, women can find out that the Bible holds two kinds of stories and that they need to listen carefully in order to identify which are oppressive texts and which passages liberate them. These interviewees were clearly demonstrating an ability to read 1 Cor. 14:34-36 through the lens of 1 Cor. 11:5. They were right to do this since Paul refers to the established

practice in 1 Cor. 11:5 that women can pray and prophesy in public worship but modifies it in a particular instance of disordered worship in 1 Cor. 14:34-36. This is further supported by the work of Birri who recognises that, in the case of the command for women to be silent in church, the right to pray and prophecy, granted in 1Cor. 11: 5 is sacrificed only for the sake of order in 1 Cor. 14: 34-5 (Birri, 1987, 37).

Another woman told a story about women's inclusion in ministry: 'My mother is an evangelist and she likes to tell stories from the Bible. She told me that you are baptised in Jesus' name. All those who have been baptised have the right to speak about him and against injustice. I hope you know Gal. 3: 28 by heart, and I replied, yes. In my group I shared this story in order to reinterpret the oppressive text 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 in the light of Gal. 3:28' (COS7F). The key text, that women discussed several times during my fieldwork interviews, was Gal. 3: 28 because it speaks directly for the inclusion of women in lay leadership and ordination as 1 Cor. 11: 5 does for preaching. Thus when 1 Cor. 14:34-36 is read through the lenses of Gal. 3:28 and of Gen. 1:27, then, although the instruction may be appropriate in the context, it cannot be a fundamental principle for it would run counter to the removal of divisions in relationship in Gal. 3:28 and the shared dominion and blessing in Gen. 1:27.

By reinterpreting 1 Cor. 14: 34-35 through 1 Cor. 11:5 and Gal. 3:28 women in the EECMY will have confidence to break down the barriers of silence and to challenge the patriarchal mindset imposed by such oppressive texts and instead speak at every appropriate opportunity in decision-making meetings and at policy-making meetings in evangelism. By so doing, women in the EECMY can begin a new journey and begin systematically to use a new way of interpreting the Bible based on women's perspectives. Women have gained, and can continue to gain, significant knowledge by listening to both each other and to sermons where they can find liberative texts or even hear oppressive texts and reinterpret them.

6.2. Genesis 2: 18-21

Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man* there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

In chapter 5 we noted that what was said about the woman in Gen. 2 was a major reason for the silence of women because it appears to teach women's subordination and men's headship. However, as some women closely studied Gen. 1:27 they found an alternative status and significance given to women. For example, one woman retold a story that she heard from a sermon on Gen. 1: 27. 'Both man and woman are created in the image of God and both are equal in the sight of God' (COS5COF). Another woman repeated a similar story, saying, 'Sometime ago I participated in a Bible study with both men and women. I listened to a particular message which said that both men and women are equal in the sight of God and I realised that we must interpret Gen. 2 through the lens of Gen.1: 27 since it can transform Gen. 2' (COS6CONF). Some women, then, are beginning to see how these oppressive texts have been used to silence women. Another female respondent said 'In Gen. 1:27 we do not see any difference between man and woman as both are equally created in the image of God but Gen. 2 showed the subordination of women to men' (I, 35, COS4FCON). Another woman commented, 'even in Gen. 2 since Adam said to the woman 'this is my flesh' nothing is indicated about the inferiority of woman to him' (I, 35, COS5CONF).

If Gen. 2 is read through the lens of Gen. 1:27 then the patriarchal features are thoroughly challenged. First, woman is not created after man but simultaneously – 'male and female, he created them'. Second, the man was not given authority over the woman, shown by naming her (Gen. 2:23), but rather both man and woman were both together given dominion over the created order. If Gen. 2 is read through Gal. 3:28, then the barriers of subordination and inferiority are removed by unity in Christ.

These readings are confirmed by Tribble's full liberative exegesis of Gen. 2 based on a close reading of the text itself. She argues that, 'Yahweh God builds the rib into

woman... hence woman is not weak..., no second sex, no derived sex, in short, no 'Adam's rib'; instead, woman is the culmination of creation, fulfilling humanity by her sexual differentiation' (Trible, 1978, 102). According to Trible, the woman is not less than the man rather she is the crown of creation. Furthermore, Trible notes that, although in Gen. 2: 22 it seems that Eve was created last, in biblical terminology often the last is regarded as 'first'. This is the case in Gen. 1.27-28 where humankind is created last and is given dominion over all other living things. Similarly in Gen. 2, woman may be seen as the culmination of creation (1973, 27). Traditionally, the naming of the woman (2:23) was taken as an indication of man's power and of the subordination of women. In contrast, Trible discards the suggestion that Adam named Eve. The text indicates that she shall be called '*woman*' which is a generic name. In contrast, according to the text, when Adam named the animals he gave each one a name to show dominion (Gen. 1: 26). Yet, according to Trible in naming the woman, the man is not establishing power over her but rather rejoicing in their mutuality (1973, 99-100; 1979, 77).

This thorough reinterpretation of Gen. 2 through the lenses of Gen. 1:27, Gal. 3:28 and an internal reinterpretation has a number of things to say to women in ministry in the EECMY. First, it explains that women are not subordinate, rather they are equal with men. Women themselves, in the light of these liberative interpretations of texts must therefore challenge the behaviour which seeks to subordinate them, for example, by ignoring their requests to speak in decision-making meetings, or by telling them to be silent. Women must insist on equal opportunities for them to preach at large public meetings such as the National Assembly, the General Council, the Synod Conventions and the Synod Councils of the EECMY because they are equal in God's sight. The reinterpretation of Gen. 2 will ensure their inclusion in lay leadership and ordination on equal terms with men, but only if women challenge the oppressive interpretations of such texts. The results of the reinterpretations are not only for women's benefit but also for the whole EECMY because the goal is for the mutual partnership of men and women as given in creation and redeemed by Christ.

6.3.3. 1 Tim. 2: 11-15 and Gen. 3 the fall

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

I am considering 1 Tim. 2: 11-15 together with the fall in Gen. 3 because 1 Tim. 2:11-15 makes reference to the fall. Both texts were regarded by women in the EECMY as oppressive, and some were able to reinterpret them in the light of the redemption of Christ, but without reference to liberative texts. For example, I observed a women's group where a woman told the story of the fall and of redemption through Christ. She said, 'I listened to a sermon saying that both Adam and Eve disobeyed God but Christ redeemed both men and women and restored them' (COS6CONF).

The woman's reference to redemption and restoration points the way to reading the texts through the lens of Gal. 3:28. Both 1 Tim. 2:11-15 and the story of the fall refer to the authority of man over woman, whereas Gal. 3:28 proclaims that any divisions of this kind are nullified through union with Christ and entry into his body. Both texts are said to blame woman for her disobedience, whereas in Gal. 3:28, baptism into Christ means that the old order of law, guilt and judgement has gone, as the context of Gal. 3:28 makes clear.

If 1 Tim. 2:11-15 is read through the lens of Gen. 1:27, it quickly becomes apparent that the author of 1 Timothy has chosen not to make use of this first creation story which knows nothing of the creation of man preceding that of woman, nor of her subordination. Rather Gen. 1:27 gives the woman authority, equal authority with the man. In this story neither woman nor man has authority over the other. Birri's work supports this reading. He refers first to the text in 1 Timothy and then shows how the interpretation given has taken account only of Gen. 2 and 3, and not of Gen. 1:27, nor of Gal. 3:28 (see also 2 Cor. 3:18 for a reference to transformation into the image of God):

The author [of 1 Timothy] seems not to pay any attention to the Genesis 1 creation narrative in which man and woman are created simultaneously in the image of God, and he does not envisage the restoration of that image by the coming of Christ' (1987, 106 c.f. Kanyoro, 2002, 91).

According to Birri, both men and women are created in the image of God, redeemed by Christ, and restored to that image through redemption. Other scholars also read 1 Tim. 2:11-15 (as 1 Cor. 14:34,35) in the light of Gal. 3:28, which states the basic principle and in relation to which other texts are secondary (Bruce, 1982, 190). 1 Tim. 2:5-11 can also be reinterpreted through the earlier reading of Gen. 2 which demonstrated that Eve's creation after Adam can set her as the pinnacle of creation. Her deception is shared by Adam who was also present and also ate the forbidden fruit. Finally, the author's view of salvation and redemption are defective. No-one is saved by childbirth, all are sinners, and all are saved by grace, which the author knows (1 Tim. 1:14-17). The implications of this liberative reading are that further patriarchal cultural and theological barriers must fall. Women can exercise their ministries rather than slavishly be confined to domesticity and child-bearing. They are not condemned to silence but must find and use their voices in ordination, preaching, leading, decision and policy-making. Women are not to be submissive, they are to stand publicly in the most public place, in the most holy place, in the place for those with authority, in the pulpit as one made in the image of God, who in Christ is fully human, fully redeemed, fully a daughter of God.

6.3.4. The maleness of Jesus

A woman representative, who had obviously heard the argument that the maleness of Jesus prevented women from presiding at the Eucharist said, 'the maleness of Jesus cannot prevent women from representing him at the Eucharist' (COS2F). It seems that she knew that representing Jesus does not refer to his maleness but rather to his humanity as Jesus himself, in his incarnation representing humanity rather than maleness. Jesus is true man and true God who was incarnate in human form in order to show God in human form rather than God as male (Birri, 1987, 144-46; c.f. Abbey, 2001, 151). Jesus also fully respected the humanity of both men and women in that he healed physical illnesses and offered salvation from sin to both women and men equally. Therefore, ordained women can represent Jesus at the Eucharist and his maleness does not exclude women from ordination or from presiding at the Eucharist since women are also included in Jesus' humanity through baptism (Gal. 3: 28), and also by being created in the image of God (Gen. 1: 27). Given that the texts are so

clear, women should be full of confidence in their status in Christ to challenge patriarchal barriers to ordination and to presiding at the Eucharist.

6.3.5. The absence of women from the 12 disciples of Jesus

Another woman interviewee said, ‘The absence of women from the 12 disciples of Jesus cannot be a good reason to limit women from representing Jesus’ (COS3F). She might have realised that, although women were not in the list of the disciples, they were followers of Jesus from Galilee to the cross then to the resurrection. By so following, women can claim the rank of discipleship. Fiorenza reminds her readers that the truth of the resurrection of Jesus was ‘revealed first to the Galilean women disciples of Jesus’ (1983, 139). She argues that they have a strong case to claim to be disciples equally with men. Women can then equally stand alongside men in ministry as disciples of Christ in all four areas on which I have focused, and especially in representing Christ as his first disciples did in the breaking of bread and offering of wine in the Eucharist.

So far in this chapter I have provided a theological response to theological barriers raised against women’s representation and participation in ministry in the EECMY by identifying liberative texts and showing how they challenge the prevailing patriarchy and also, with reference to the Gospel stories of women, offer a role model to inspire women in ministry to exercise their insight, gifts and authority. Secondly I have shown how it is possible to reinterpret oppressive texts through the lens of the liberative texts of Gal. 3:28, Gen. 1:27 and to a lesser extent 1 Cor. 11:5 in such a way that it challenges these patriarchal theological discourses and calls for certain tangible changes and developments in EECMY policy and practice. I will address these in the next section and I will begin by returning to consideration of EECMY policy decisions surrounding the representation of women in ministry, then move on to consider what principles (values) are called for as a result of my theological response, and end by outlining what practical changes are called for to implement the principles and policy changes suggested.

6.4. Transforming EECMY policy

In chapter 3, I discussed EECMY policies to support women's involvement in ministry with reference to two policies: one was the representation of women in decision-making and the other was the ordination of women. The current policy on the representation of women on decision-making bodies at all levels is 40%. The question may be asked why seek to increase this percentage since women's representation is still far below 40%? However, the response is that we *should* change the policy to give women 50% representation because it would act as a powerful symbol of women's absolute equality with men. This would be a powerful signal of their equality even if it were not implemented immediately. Secondly, we need to implement both the current 40% policy on representation and the policy allowing the ordination of women, and we need to implement this in all synods, parishes and congregations. The Church will be helped to implement its policies if women become involved in the practical implementation of a number of principles and practical strategies to which we now turn.

6.5. Transforming EECMY practice

This section establishes four key principles which women in ministry and other women and men who wish to support them must embrace in order to transform the status and role of women in the holistic ministry of the EECMY. The principles are: conscientization, capacity building, partnership and theological education and these enshrine certain values which relate both to objectives and the ways in which they are achieved. For example, conscientization is based on the value of ending oppression and readily grows out of the liberative texts. Engendered theological education is about the value of realising potential and learning for change. Partnership as a value is related to how people work to achieve change and privileges community over individuality. Capacity building acknowledges the value of growth and development. It acknowledges that we do not learn and change in a moment, but that we need time to develop.

I will discuss the principles in turn and after this, I will consider practical strategies for realising the principles. The aim is to challenge the marginalization of women in

ministry and to begin to make some liberative changes in women's situations in ministry.

6.5.1. Principles

Conscientization

One of the reasons for the silence of women identified in chapter 5 was the impact of experiences such as violence, rape, powerlessness and shame on women, which when internalised lead to negative images of their own self worth and a consequent culture of silence. Such negative self-understanding is common in women who have been treated as objects under the control of others rather than as liberated subjects who can make their own decisions. In order for women who have been silenced in this way to gain their voice, they need to come to a critical understanding of themselves and their condition. The process has a number of names, 'self-consciousness', 'awareness-raising' and its most influential name, conscientization. According to Freire, conscientization is a pedagogical system for liberating those who are victims of an oppressive system (Freire, 1972, 30; Taylor, 1993, 52; Troch, 1994, 351). It is also a process during which one becomes aware of something and begins to suspect 'one's oppressed condition' (Isasi-Diaz, 2001, 94).

In her article on 'Forming Future Feminists', Miller uses the pedagogical method of conscientization as developed by Fiorenza for teaching a course on God and Human Sexuality in a Catholic University in Texas. The article is helpful in relating the process of conscientization to learning about God and sexuality, which is pertinent to the situation of women in ministry in the EECMY. Her list of five steps shows the process of conscientization at work and is illuminating in bringing out the character of conscientization in a way that shows links to women in ministry in the EECMY. She lists the five steps as:

- 1) learn not to take the bible literally
- 2) question how we have been taught to read the bible and other patriarchal/kyriarchal texts
- 3) overcome roadblocks to conscientization
- 4) develop resistant readers/readings by reflecting critically on personal experience
- 5) develop emancipatory theologies and actions (Miller, 2009, 101).

It is possible to identify in these steps some of the characteristics of conscientization described by Freire, for example, learning to identify sources of oppression, in this case the oppression centred in literal readings of the Bible developed from the ways

in which students were taught to read it. A further characteristic is the painful and long road to self-consciousness, the awareness of being oppressed, with all its resulting emotions. The next two stages relate well to the first part of this chapter and to the experience of women in ministry in the EECMY as judged by their responses in the fieldwork. They were learning to develop resistant readings from their own experience and they were developing liberating texts, although there was little evidence of praxis.

Thus, Freire insists that the process of conscientization involves praxis. He says praxis is 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (1983, 36). Women in ministry who are oppressed can be helped through discussion of their situation with others, and through reflection to engage in action to change their situations, and through a cycle of action and reflection also find themselves changed. Conscientization is a key principle for change for women in ministry in the EECMY in all four areas of ministry.

Capacity building

Eade and Williams explain capacity building as follows: 'strengthening people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to organize themselves to act on these, is the basis of development (Eade and Williams, 1995, 9, see Mengistu, 2002, 1). If this definition is applied into women's ministry in the EECMY, then it refers to strengthening women's ability to make their own decisions about their priorities in ministry and to strengthen them to be able to organise themselves effectively to be able to begin to work to implement their priorities. The very way in which the principle is worded suggests that capacity building is about forging links between women. It involves creating opportunities for women to share experiences together and gain a sense of collectivity so that they feel mobilised as a community. This community activity links closely with the next principle of partnership. Capacity building will also include learning different skills at different levels from literacy to academic theological education, and from building self-esteem to training in public speaking and management in order that women are more ready to engage effectively in decision-making and strategic planning.

Partnership

Partnership in this context is an essential strategy to empower women and was widely discussed among my respondents. For example, a woman commented that, 'partnership of women with other women within the EECMY is a means to empowering women' (I, 35, COS2M). Pukoi defines power in two ways: power over others and power with others. Power over others is when it dominates those who are powerless, and power with others is when it works with people to transform situations and lives. Power with others helps to create a partnership of equals within the community of faith (Pukoi, 2002, 106). This can also work to create a community of women in which freedom, justice, peace and inclusivity prevail instead of fear, separation, and anxiety and alienation at all levels (see Pukoi, 2002, 106-107). The initial aim is to strengthen partnership between women in order to support and value one another and build powerful groups which, as they work together, can have the power to challenge the barriers of patriarchal culture and theology.

Oduyoye considers that 'partnership of women and men ordained or not, is the true image of the Church of Christ' (2001, 86). While this may be true, yet, it is more advantageous for women to be first in partnership with other women in order to have a safe space in the same way that 'The Circle' does, and in order to learn from one another. I do not wish to deny Oduyoye's statement when she says that men and women have been called to be 'the image of the Church of Christ' (2001, 86), but the problem is that some men always feel superior in church ministry and completely forget that women are included as equals in Christ (Gal. 3: 28). If this is the case, women in ministry in the EECMY must first ensure from their solidarity with other women that they are sufficiently strong to face such androcentricity. Nevertheless, the eventual goal of partnership is to include men in a community of women and men in the EECMY.

However, initially partnership needs to be about women forming a *solidarity* with *other* women and working together to achieve their goals. Oduyoye defines the term *solidarity* as 'walking hand in hand, and developing strength through unity so that common interests are protected and common aims are achieved' (1990, 43, Russell, 1979, 75, also see Isasi-Diaz, 2001, 99). Solidarity reflects sharing in common within the principle of partnership. Elisa Tamez from Latina America reflects on the

solidarity between Mary and Elisabeth who shared their common experiences with each other in order to strengthen their ability to move forward to do the will of God in a context of struggle and difficulty. This is a good model and rationale for creating solidarity among women (1994, 208). Solidarity means that women in ministry in the EECMY have other women in ministry in the EECMY to whom they belong and with whom they share responsibility for the work of challenging patriarchal structures; they are not left isolated. Solidarity can be experienced both in small groups and in large gatherings of women where small groups come together as we shall see in the next section of the chapter.

Engendered theological education

In all African countries, including Ethiopia, women need education. We have seen from the literature review that it was a key theme in the work of the 'Circle'. It is a key principle for change and is, therefore, one of the main strategies for empowering women within the EECMY. It will enable them to increase their theological knowledge so that they will be able to challenge patriarchal interpretations of Scripture which have been used to hold them back both from holding leadership roles and from being ordained. Most of my respondents agree that education is key for women's development within the EECMY. For example, one particular male observed that, 'education is one of the main strategies to empower both men and women but women's accesses to this is insufficient' (COS6M).

Given that women as well as men are intended to achieve their God-given potential, then engendered theological education needs to be available to women at all levels of the EECMY. This is particularly important when women are taught by men in ways that need not make reference to women's experiences.

Having identified principles that need to be embraced as foundational for change, I move on to examine the practices through which the principles will be realised.

6.5.2 Practices

Women only groups already in existence

The purpose of women only groups is primarily to help women to find their voice by putting them alongside others with similar experiences in a supportive environment, when previously they have been silenced in a hostile environment. Women only groups can be of many kinds with different purposes, as we shall see, but the underlying purpose in my context is the one described here.

Women only groups were first introduced by the EECMY women's ministry coordinators in 1961 (Women's Guide, 2001, 1). They meet at congregational level every two weeks to hold Bible studies and engage in fund raising. They are run by their own committees but most of the Bible studies are led by men because in some groups all the members are illiterate (ibid, 2001, 35). Although the already established women's groups fulfil this strategy to some degree, leadership of any of these groups by a male is both contradictory and a significant weakness. The weakness is significant because the probability of male authority preventing women from determining their own priorities and values is very high, so high in fact that it might not be possible to use such groups for this strategy unless there can be a change so that they are facilitated and led by women.

The second problem relating to the current structure of these pre-existing women only groups is their focus on fundraising. If their purpose is simply to raise funds for men to determine their use, then this will again sideline the purpose of the group. If however, a realistic proportion of the fund-raising can be directed to women's development - education, training and awareness raising - then it would give significant power and a real impetus to such groups.

Women only groups for awareness-raising

Awareness-raising is centrally important at congregation level and can take place in the women only groups. One of the simplest ways of raising awareness is to provide information. As we have seen, many respondents from the fieldwork suggested that information about, for example, the ordination of women, or the representation of women on decision-making bodies at regional and national level does not easily

reach to the grassroots. Thus, a woman commented that ‘in my synod, many congregations do not have any idea about decisions on women’s ordination’ (COS7CONF, c.f. Q.43). It would be possible to organise a common programme from the Women’s Office for all synods and from there through women’s channels to roll this out to all parishes and congregations to ensure that key information about women’s representation and ordination is provided and discussed at regular intervals. Discussions might include, for example, the most recent policy decisions on women’s representation on synod and national committees, together with actual numbers of women serving on the committees, and the numbers of women and men being accepted for ordination training. A further task for these groups would be to understand and promote women’s representation and participation on decision-making and policy making bodies and in lay leadership beginning at congregational level.

Another task for women only groups is to envision their future of 50% representation and full participation in all aspects of women’s ministry without any marginalization on the basis of gender roles. Envisioning is important because women need to gain a sense of their goals in order to have the strength to challenge the dominant attitudes which have been the foundation of women’s exclusion. Such dialogue was highly recommended by women respondents in the fieldwork. A woman representative said that, ‘grouping women together helps us to become aware of how we can learn from one another’ (I, 35, COS6F). Through discussions among themselves, women may find the strength to begin to challenge decisions at local level, for example, the funding of male representatives to attend the synod rather than women, in order little by little, to move towards the goal of participating fully in ministry in the EECMY.

Women’s Bible study groups

Bible study was the other activity of the original EECMY women only groups. As we have already identified, a key problem was male leadership because of problems regarding women’s literacy. In order to solve this problem, one important task is urgently to identify and train suitable woman leaders. Another important ingredient to address the marginalization of women in ministry is to ensure that both in the leader’s training and then in the delivery Bible study addresses texts about women. We have seen through the interviews the potential of women sharing their

experiences and integrating these with reading or listening to the biblical texts. Women begin to recognise the text's androcentric nature and interpretation, and, by using their experience and liberative readings, break through to create a liberative theology which can become a way of beginning a journey out of the patriarchal mindset to celebrating women's ways of thinking and knowing.

The purpose of the Bible study groups then is to empower women to interpret the Bible through storytelling from women's day-to-day lives. Their goal is to identify, receive and internalise the liberative texts so that they believe and act as liberated women, and to reinterpret the oppressive texts we discussed in chapter 5 and reinterpreted earlier. The latter is also very important because women must be alert and suspicious of a text which Fiorenza describes as 'a male-centred book' (1992, 53).

I propose to start Bible study groups at Hosanna Congregation with the Kambata tribe in connection with Hassan Theological Seminary where the Bible study leaders are trained and where they include influences from African women theologians in the content of the Bible studies. A group in this location could become a centre for all the southern synods and it is also close to the Central Addis Ababa Synod. A similar group could also be established with the Oromo tribe in the west at Onesmos Nesib Seminary at Brbir Dila synod.

Women's prayer groups

Prayer groups already exist among women in the EECMY. They are part of the women only Bible study groups who offer collective prayers for the work of the EECMY (Women's Ministry guide, 2001, 17). Fundamentally, women in the Bible study groups believe in the power of prayer and in living by the Word. However, Oduyoye goes further than this when she urges African women to name their experiences in prayer and then to speak out to expose degrading practices and attitudes (1990, 68). By doing this, women exercise their God-given gifts of bringing forth life and raising a prophetic voice. Snee suggests that praying includes the expression of a range of feelings: 'we must pray with tongues loosened, ready to cry out our anger, rage, pain and desire, refusing any longer to be silent' (2004, 1). She refers to the way in which, through prayer, women can find a voice to express and,

therefore, release their deep felt pain, suffering and desires before God. This practice is important for women in the EECMY, who can in this way choose to dare to name what has previously been un-named, problems such as violence against women, rape, FGM, and women battering. Women can find a voice for the first time to cry out their suffering and to cry out against atrocities among themselves and before God.

Furthermore, establishing women's prayer groups is another essential strategy, given their context for women to give voice to their oppression to one another and to God, and through this to experience a greater critical consciousness, solidarity and courage in their struggle to challenge the barriers in themselves to oppose the ways in which they are excluded and subordinated in all four areas of ministry.

Engendered theological education and training

The principle of engendered theological education which was discussed in the literature review needs to be implemented at all levels. At the congregation level it will take place, as already discussed, as part of women only Bible study groups. A further practical strategy which already allows literate women to access theological education locally is through the basic Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programme (Sadi, 2003, 38; Haile, 2006, 43; EECMY TEE manual, 2000, 7). The current programme and delivery need to be augmented by a gradual process both of training and appointing women tutors and also of engendering the materials. Currently, the EECMY prepares this basic TEE material in Amharic and in local languages (Sadi, 2006, 48; Western Synod annual report, 2001). TEE in English at the more advanced Diploma and Bachelor levels is already available for those called to lay leadership and ordination, but, like the Basic TEE, it needs to be engendered and 50% of it should be taught by women. Finally, residential engendered theological education at degree, post-graduate and doctoral level studies, needs to be provided for women and men, so that women can increasingly become theological educators themselves, and men can be exposed to engendered theological thinking. The benefits of the latter were discussed in the literature review and can be summarised as a further step towards equality between men and women in ministry. We noted that there is currently a lack of women lecturers at the EECMY seminaries, indeed there is no professional woman theologian within the EECMY (MYTS report, 2008). However, if women lecturers were to be trained and appointed, then, women

gaining access to theological training may also engage at a deeper level with gendered approaches to theology and then reflect this in their preaching and in their engagement with pastoral issues in their congregations.

Women only workshops

Women in ministry in the EECMY already have some experience of workshops held to discuss FGM where the effects have been liberating for women. However, a number of respondents from the fieldwork, both men and women, suggested the need for different topics for women's workshops at different levels. For example, a woman respondent suggested the following topics at national and synod levels: 'decision-making, public speaking, sharing of responsibility and how to make arguments and provide evidence' (I, 35, COS6F). These areas are indeed crucial because, in order to enable women to speak effectively, for example, at the General Assembly in front of 500 people, they need to become confident in how to gather and present arguments as well as how to speak persuasively in a public setting.

Workshops on assertiveness training and also on collaborative working are needed to help women in ministry, particularly, but not exclusively, in decision-making and policy-making in evangelism to recognise when they need to be assertive and how to be assertive. They then need to practise in the workshop - a safe place - how to challenge patriarchal behaviour including displays of power, bullying, and sidelining. Similarly, women need to have the opportunity to learn what management involves, and how to manage a range of activities such as future planning, routine tasks, workload, budgets and people. In learning to manage people, women need to learn how to lead collaboratively.

Another woman suggested subjects for local levels, that is congregation and parish: 'The workshop at local level must cover subjects such as leadership and women's ordination' (I, 35, COS3F). I have already referred to the way in which awareness about these ministries can be raised in the women only groups. Women only workshops on these subjects would allow for contributions from ordained women leaders acting as role models from beyond the congregation as well as the opportunity for women to ask questions and to contribute from their experience. Women at this level too need training for public speaking and assertiveness for their

own context, so that they can communicate at elders' meetings their experience of patriarchal barriers to women's participation in ministry and also the importance of women's sharing in leadership and ordained ministry.

It is particularly important that both leaders and participants of these workshops and seminars should be women because they know what women's issues and experiences are, they can voice their *own* experiences, and leaders can address them. Moreover, women leaders can become role modules for participants. One of the barriers that will have to be challenged is the way in which men seek to address and control conferences and workshops about women's issues. I have recounted a number of examples of this within the thesis in relation to women's ordination. When issues in women's workshops apply directly to women, it is more fruitful if only women attend and lead such workshops.

The planning of such workshops will demand some organisation. It is important that the planning as well as the running of the workshops is in the hands of women. It is another obvious role for the Women's Board. If the EECMY has created a women only section, then it becomes the obvious one to use for workshops and other women only events. It may also prevent criticism because it is acting consistently within its terms of reference.

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that some women in the EECMY have already begun to identify liberative texts such as Gal. 3:28 and Gen. 1:27, which they have made their own and know by heart. I have argued that these texts are paradigmatic for establishing the full humanity and equality of women in ministry. They are, therefore, a fundamental resource in challenging the patriarchal barriers that seek both to exclude women from, for example, ordination on the basis of subordination, and also to marginalize women, for example, in lay leadership from public ministry. I have also argued that these texts cannot be robbed of their power by arguments put forward by complementarians who seek to subordinate women again by reference to gender roles. Rather, I have argued that these texts overcome specific religious laws and cultural traditions that subordinate women.

I have also argued that the Gospel stories about women and the references to them in Paul's epistles show this liberating equality being lived out. The value that Jesus gives to women and the apostolic and leadership roles that they have, both in the gospels and epistles, provide evidence of their equal status with men in leading and establishing churches. These findings should give confidence to women to struggle for equality in their call to ordination, in their leadership roles and in participating in decision-making.

I demonstrated that reading the oppressive texts of 1 Cor. 14: 34-5, 1Tim. 2: 11-15 and Gen. 2 and 3 through the lenses of the liberative texts already mentioned removes their power and enables women in ministry to use the liberative texts in the same way to challenge the foundations of oppressive traditions that exclude, sideline and belittle women.

I showed how the argument against women's ordination based on the maleness of Christ has ignored the real significance of the incarnation which resulted in the enabling of both men and women as human beings to represent Christ at the Eucharist. Additionally, I showed how the absence of women from the 12 disciples of Jesus was countered by the record of the faithful discipleship of women throughout the gospel stories. I suggested that these arguments should increase the confidence of women in their ability to be ordained and to be public representative ministers holding leadership positions.

I argued that the EECMY ought to increase women's representation from 40 to 50% as a symbol of the equality of women in all areas of ministry including decision-making, policy making and leadership. Further, I argued that the current policy of 40% needs urgently to be implemented at all levels of the EECMY's structure.

Having made a theological response to the silence of women in the first part of the chapter, I argued that these theological readings call for certain measures – changes in policy, principle and practice. Policy changes (from 40% to 50%) will only be effective if there are changes in principle and practice. I argued that women need first to embrace four key principles, conscientization, capacity building, partnership and theological education, which are foundational for achieving change.

I argued that conscientization would enable women in ministry in the EECMY to recognise for themselves their oppressed status but also, through critical consciousness of their experience involving reflection in dialogue with other women, to engage in praxis to challenge the causes of their oppression. The causes of their oppression equate with the reasons for their silence, discussed in chapter 5, such as the patriarchal traditions that confine women to domesticity, that label them as impure, and that regard them as inferior and subordinate.

I suggested that capacity building could target the skills that women need to be able to transform their lives and situations. I emphasised that the skills needed to build capacity would be different at different levels of the church. I also indicated that capacity building relates to collaborative working and the next principle of partnership. I argued that partnership is vital to the transformation of women's oppression because of the strength, power and support that women experience from working collaboratively.

I argued that the final principle, theological education, is fundamental to changing women's ministry because it would give them the knowledge to respond to the oppressive theological texts used to marginalize them.

I argued that there are practical workable strategies which, if implemented, would improve the situation by lessening patriarchal attitudes and behaviour and by increasing women's representation and participation in ministry. I argued that a key underlying strategy was women only groups. I acknowledged that the EECMY already has such groups but that these would have to change in order to be authentically women only groups, and that a change in their agenda to include fundraising for women would provide an impetus to their existence and would add great value to their existence.

I argued that women only groups established for capacity building and conscientization would empower women both through greater self-awareness and also through increased skills and knowledge to be able to participate effectively in decision-making and policy making in evangelism. I suggested that women only

Bible studies would increase the confidence of women and equip them to directly challenge patriarchal interpretations of women's ministry from scripture. Women only prayer groups would help women at congregational level to find a voice to express the pain of their oppression before one another and before God.

I argued that women engaging in engendered theological education would enable them to gain the knowledge and skills to challenge patriarchy in women's ministry and, when ordained, to contribute to the transformation of the lives of women in their churches. Additionally, women should engage in postgraduate theological education in order to become eligible to be tutors in seminaries. This in turn would ensure that engendered theological education and training for ordination is introduced there and shared with male ordination candidates to begin a process of transformation among them.

Finally as a result of feedback from interviewees, I suggested that different workshops at different levels could be used to help women at congregation level to understand, for example, both the importance and significance of women's ordination, and the skills needed for speaking in public. At synod and national level, workshops on assertiveness, making an argument, public speaking and management would help women to speak in public, to contribute effectively to decision-making and policy making meetings in evangelism, and to consider themselves eligible to apply for senior management positions in ministry in the EECMY.

I have acknowledged in this chapter the enormity of the task of transforming women's ministry in the EECMY and the importance of accepting that changes may be small, but that continuing the struggle to challenge patriarchal attitudes and practices towards women in ministry is vital, that progress will be slow and that the journey to equality and mutuality with men in ministry is a long one. However, the Biblical texts of Gal. 3: 28 and Gen. 1:27 are clear, Friere's principle of conscientization has proved its effectiveness and women travelling together in partnership are immensely powerful. For these reasons, I have hope that transformation will be achieved.

Conclusion

My thesis is that women in ministry in the EECMY are marginalized at all levels of the Church by deep-seated cultural and theological patriarchy and that this should and can be challenged and a series of theological and practical responses made which can begin to address the patriarchy and transform women's silence. I argue from the evidence of interviews, questionnaires and participant observation, supported by literature, that women in the EECMY are silent because they are severely under-represented in four key areas: on decision-making bodies, at management levels in evangelism, in lay leadership and in ordination because of opposition to their involvement in such roles, based on cultural and theological norms. Further, I use the same body of evidence to argue that even when women achieve marginal representation in the areas mentioned, they have to struggle against powerful, hostile cultural and theological forces in order to participate in meaningful ways in those four areas of ministry and some choose rather to remain silent. In response to these patriarchal barriers, I argue that there is a theological imperative for challenging this domination and marginalization of women in ministry based on liberating biblical texts centred on Gal 3:28. I argue further that practical principles and workable strategies can be embraced and employed for working towards equal representation in strategic leadership and a fuller participation with men in all aspects of public ministry. I recognized that some of these strategies such as women only groups were already in limited use in the EECMY but that they have been influenced by patriarchy - in this case by a women's group with a male leader - and that they need to be changed. If and when they are, such groups can help women to recognize their value and status, to develop and use their gifts and abilities in ministry and to challenge the cultural and theological barriers with greater confidence.

The introduction prepared the ground for the thesis. The rationale explained how my experience as a senior leader in the EECMY had led me to identify the silence of women in ministry as a serious problem to be investigated and addressed. I introduced the four areas of ministry most affected which became the subject of my investigation, decision-making, evangelism, lay leadership and ordination. I set out the aims of the thesis and then, in order to better understand how ministry is

exercised and challenged by patriarchy I set the thesis in its context of the EECMY's national, regional and local structures and relevant policy decisions.

Having set the scene for the thesis, I then gathered literary resources although I made it clear at the outset that the literature used was secondary to the primary resource of fieldwork because I wanted to give voice to the experiences of women in ministry. The very slight, unpublished, Ethiopian literature provided a thin but valuable resource because it was focused directly on the four areas of ministry in an Ethiopian context. The lack of Ethiopian literature on women in ministry meant that I had to turn to the literature of African women theologians – the Circle – on cultural and biblical hermeneutics, ordination and engendered theological education. Literature on cultural hermeneutics enabled me to recognize the positive contribution of women telling the stories of their experience as well as the negative impact of cultural traditions and practices such as women's silence in the presence of men, early marriage and FGM. Related to this, the work on biblical hermeneutics identified the importance of women holding conversations in their Bible studies between their experience and the biblical text to identify oppressive and liberative features in both settings. The setting down of the arguments for and against ordination in some of the literature helped me to clarify my own thinking and that on engendered theological education highlighted the current paucity of provision for women in the EECMY and provided a vision of what a transformed provision might look like.

Literature from white western feminists was needed to fill the remaining gaps including biblical exegesis both of oppressive texts to resource chapter 5 on reasons for women's silence, and of key liberative texts to respond to this in chapter 6. Further works on feminist anthropology, ordination and models of women's ministry were important both for nuancing my understanding of the status of women in ministry and for understanding differentiation in the ways in which women embodied and expressed their ministries.

My key research method, however, was fieldwork which I chose in order to listen to the voices of women in the EECMY in order to gather evidence about whether, how and why women were silent/ced in ministry. My hypothesis that women are subordinate and marginalized came out of my experience as a member of the

EECMY for 26 years and a senior leader for 10 years. I also argued that marginalization has continued because of the EECMY's failure to implement its own policy decisions on women's representation on decision-making bodies and on their ordination. My research questions addressed the current representation and participation of women, to find out their perception of the implementation of policy decisions, and to discover whether, how, why, and at what levels and in what ways women were being marginalized.

I proposed that the best way of collecting and ensuring sufficient data and its accuracy was to use mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection, the latter as questionnaires and the former as interviews and participant observation. Purposive rather than random sampling was a more appropriate method because I had identified my target group. I therefore chose to interview Church members and leaders ordained and lay and to observe decision-making meetings at national regional and local levels. In addition, I used questionnaires to triangulate results from the qualitative data from the same 6 synods and their respective, representative parishes and congregations which were representative of the whole EECMY in their geographical locations, missionary histories and ethnic groups. Further, although my focus was on women's ministry it was necessary to collect data from men in order to understand cultural barriers and the reasons for them more clearly. I explained the planning of the practical aspects of the fieldwork including pilot interviews and questionnaires to test the clarity of the questions and I evaluated all three research methods and collected and analysed the data that came from it according to ethical guidelines. That data when analysed became the evidence base for the next three chapters which were the heart of the thesis.

These three chapters severally discussed how women are silenced in ministry in the EECMY at each of its structural levels, in decision-making and evangelism (chapter 3) and in lay leadership and ordination (chapter 4) and the reasons for this marginalisation (chapter 5). In chapter 3, I demonstrated from the fieldwork data that there were four key ways of silencing women in decision-making meetings. These were by their deliberate exclusion, by their being deliberately silenced, by hostile responses to the women's contributions in words and looks, and by the choice of women themselves to remain silent.

Women were silenced by exclusion in a number of ways. First when a synod reports to the Central Office that it has met its quota of 40% representation from its parishes and congregations to the national General Assembly and Council, it has simply not done so, and has never intended to bring its quota of women representatives to these national meetings. I explained that it was very difficult to counteract such behaviour because women may not even realise what has happened since there is no register of names of those elected that could be used for checking. Second, I argued that deliberate exclusion happens frequently when a senior male leader at synod level forbids an elected member to attend the national meetings and chooses to send a less experienced woman or even a man who will follow his lead. Again, it is difficult to counteract such behaviour because it is the senior male leader who holds the power. It also happens that women are excluded because their husbands will not allow them to attend meetings because of work in the home or will not allow the travel costs, which the church should have paid but it has also withheld.

Women attending meetings at both national and synod levels were sometimes not permitted to speak in that their request to speak was noted but they were deliberately ignored. In other cases, they could not speak because they were not seen because men simply assumed that no woman would want to speak in a public meeting. Further, women were silenced when they attempted to speak at the large public meetings at synod and national level by the hostility of fellow male members. This showed itself in a number of ways, by a hostile look or stare which communicated that they should be silent, or questioned their right to speak; by openly criticising their words or the way in which they were spoken, and by ridiculing their words and treating them as insignificant. The effect of such behaviour was to embarrass and humiliate women so that some gave up the struggle and became passive spectators. This last group were the ones who chose to remain silent, in some cases because they had given up the struggle, but also because they had been selected for their silence, or because they did not understand the debate or even the language in which it was held, or they did not have the confidence to speak. Others chose not to speak because of the cultural norm of female silence in the presence of men in public. The latter was true of a woman at all levels of the Church.

In the second part of chapter 3 on marginalization of women in the ministry of evangelism, I explained that although women were actively involved in supporting evangelism at local levels especially through fund raising, they were generally excluded from preaching. This role was generally reserved for the paid evangelists, a higher status role dominated by men who then gained a place on the parish committee giving access to planning and policy-making. The same pattern of exclusion of women from management and policy-making in evangelism continued at synod and national levels where women were routinely sidelined from management positions in the DMT at both levels. The pattern was the same at training events such as workshops for developing skills in planning for evangelism. Women were generally very poorly represented at such events, and when they did attend, evidence showed that they were marginalized to traditional roles of fund-raising and hospitality. The effect of such marginalization was multifaceted; it prevented women from having access to funds to develop their initiatives in evangelism; it prevented them from using their gifts and caused deep frustration, and it devalued both them and their contribution to the ministry. It demonstrated again the realities of male power in that they are the ones who make decisions and plans including control of resources, and hold the positions of high status.

Women's exclusion from decision-making and evangelism made them invisible in public in all areas of these ministries particularly in strategic management where important decisions take place. Such absence seriously limited the implementation of women's vision for serving in the EECMY holistic ministry since they could not share their valuable gifts for shaping the structures and planning strategies with their male counterparts.

In chapter 4, the pattern of women's marginalization in lay leadership was the same at all levels of the Church. These consisted of relegating women from the large public occasion of worship where they might display their gifts and abilities in such a way that it might commend the ministry of women and give greater recognition to their equal status in ministry with men, to the private, more routine occasions involving familiar colleagues in small-scale worship. This was evident at national and regional levels, contrasting the large public assemblies, conventions and councils with the small, routine office devotions, and at local levels where women might lead

devotions at Bible studies but not at Sunday worship. The treatment of lay leaders by men demonstrates the control that men exercise over women in limiting the extent and development of their ministry and in transferring them from lay leadership to domestic chores. One effect of such displacement was to render women irrelevant to lay leadership because their role could so easily be transferred to a different menial task.

In the second part of chapter 4 demonstrated that women had been excluded from ordination in different ways at every level of the Church. At national and synod levels the Church has failed to press for or even commend the implementation of the policy on ordination. Similarly, at congregation and parish levels there was a failure to implement the decision, in some places there was even ignorance about the fact that women could be ordained and there was a general preference for calling men to ordination rather than women. Apparent efforts at national level to encourage women's ordination through a series of workshops for women were ineffective and counter-productive in that there were no women speakers at the conference, more men were invited to attend than women and the male speakers spoke against the ordination of women. At local level the congregations have largely failed to extend a call to women and where they have, synods have on a number of occasions refused to ratify the call, even though the call lies with the congregation, not the synod. Where women have been ordained, I identified that they have not been selected for management positions at national and synod level, thus blocking the way for women to attain influence in making policies to support both the ordination of women and other women's ministries.

Having discussed in chapters 3 and 4 the ways in which women were both silent and silenced in the ministry of the EECMY, in chapter 5 I discussed the reasons for this in order to identify the cultural and theological barriers to which I would respond in chapter 6. I therefore organised the chapter into two sections covering first the cultural and then the theological reasons for the silence of women in ministry in the EECMY, although I emphasised that cultural and theological reasons were closely entwined. Beginning with cultural reasons, I suggested that men's power over women is a key factor in their silence because men control women's movements, their work, its amount and where it takes place, in and outside the home. Men have

absolute control over finance, women have no money of their own at home or in the church through their fund-raising – it is all given to men to determine its use. I discovered that men's physical power over women most severely abused in rape, violence and FGM is for women a real cause of fear of men and its effectiveness in silencing them in ministry and every other aspect of life can be almost total. Women in ministry in the EECMY were also silenced because of the influence on former members of the EOC's patriarchal traditions on women's exclusion from any form of public ministry and their association with impurity. Similarly, the Norwegian Lutheran missionaries were a further cause of silence in the south because of their assumptions that women were less capable than men and more suited to work with children. This reinforced the Ethiopian patriarchal view that men are the decision-makers and speakers, whereas women are weak and inferior. A key reason for women's silence is that they internalise these views that men have of them and their cultural expectations and are then complicit in the patriarchy and communicate these traditions to the next generation through the family. Its effect on women is to destroy any self-confidence and self-worth, to make them submissive and actually believe that what has been said about them is true.

Another reason for the silence of women in ministry is the low level of general education of women which then is a factor in their exclusion from theological education. Although the general education of girls has improved they still have less access to secondary and higher education than boys and young men because women are put to work in the home or prepared for early marriage as income for the father. Women have less access to theological education than men because the policy of the EECMY to fund women is not implemented by congregations, parishes and synods. Given that funds are always scarce, the funding of a male nearly always takes preference.

The theological reasons for the exclusion of women from the four areas of ministry focused on arguments based on the patriarchal use of biblical texts since the EECMY is both an evangelical and a Lutheran church so that the final authority of scripture in matters of faith and conduct is paramount. 1 Cor. 14:34, 35 was used because it advocated women's silence in church and therefore their exclusion from preaching in public worship, thus excluding women from both lay leadership and ordination. The

effects of 1 Tim. 2:5-11 were even more limiting. Women were to be excluded as before from ordination and lay leadership because of the demand for silence but then extending this to the decision-making and management areas of ministry, women were not to have authority over men, but rather were to be confined to domesticity for the purpose of child-bearing. Further allusions to their sinfulness were based on Genesis 2 and 3, which are used to confirm their subordination to men and their inferior moral status relegate women further enjoining silence, sinfulness, and inferior moral character. Further theological reasons advanced in the fieldwork included the maleness of God and the absence of women from the disciples, both of which excluded women from ordination because one reinforces the other in the view that women cannot represent Christ at the Eucharist because of her gender.

The aim of chapter 6 was to respond to the previous three chapters which had discussed ways in which, and the reasons why women are silenced within the four areas of decision-making, policy making in evangelism, lay leadership and ordination in ministry in the EECMY. I acknowledged that responding to the cultural and theological barriers identified in chapter 5 was a huge task. Given their immensity I argued that I could not suggest that implementation of the suggestions made in chapter 6 would “solve” the problems of cultural and theological patriarchy. I did, however, propose that they might improve the situation and lessen the impact of the problems in different localities where the suggestions are implemented.

I argued that the identification, study and internalisation of liberative texts such as Gal. 3:28 and Gen. 1:27, and Gospel stories about women and examples of women leaders in the Epistles would improve women’s self-identity and self-confidence and challenge the theological barriers against women’s ministry. Gal. 3:28 declares that women share with men in Christ the new humanity which makes them equal in every way with men, not only in the sight of God, but also in society, in their social status. It means that women can legitimately participate fully in all four areas of ministry. I suggested that oppressive texts identified in chapter 5 might be re-interpreted through the lens of liberative texts such as Gal. 3:28 and Gen. 1:27 and be used to challenge the patriarchal theological discourses and as a result might also help the EECMY to challenge cultural discourses (given its holistic approach to ministry), which so marginalize women in all aspects of ministry. I explained that 1 Tim. 2:11-15 is

based on a patriarchal understanding of Genesis 2 and 3 and that the latter has been challenged by Tribble to demonstrate women's equality in Gen. 2 and shared responsibility for the Fall with Adam in Gen. 3. Patriarchal theological discourse is weakened by these findings and can be challenged by women, who, strengthened by insights from these new readings and from liberative texts, can begin to speak out against and resist the demands of patriarchal culture. This approach of discussing and reinterpreting Bible texts is the right one because firstly this is the basis on which women are excluded and because secondly, due to this and given the EECMY's evangelical tradition, this has to be part of the solution.

The theological response to the silence of women in ministry requires practical implementation by embracing practical strategic principles and practical strategies to address the cultural and theological barriers that have been identified and to give expression to the liberative readings that have been considered. I argued that there were four key principles which women in ministry and other women and men who wish to support them must embrace and on which the strategies depend; they are Conscientization, Capacity Building, Partnership and Theological Education. I explained each of the four principles: conscientization to awaken women to their internalisation of oppression in the home and family, in the rites of birth, puberty and marriage and in representation and participation in ministry; and capacity building to develop women's skills in decision-making, public speaking, leadership, finance and management in order to equip them for participation and leadership. Partnership is needed to make women powerful by being with others, so that the power resides in the group working together and not in any individual having power over another. It can also overcome the isolation of those who challenge patriarchal structures, to ensure that there is a safe place where women can tell their painful stories of oppression and find their voice. Engendered theological education is where women can develop their theological knowledge and skills to equip them for ordained ministry, lay leadership, and some for work in seminaries as women tutors.

Moving from strategic principles to practices, I argued that a number of practical workable strategies could be identified and implemented which would improve women's situation by lessening the impact of patriarchal attitudes and behaviour and by increasing women's representation and participation in ministry. A key

underlying strategy was to develop women only groups. I acknowledged that the EECMY already had such groups but that these would have to change in two ways by substituting female leaders for male and by altering the groups' agendas so that some of the money from fundraising activity undertaken only by women in these groups would be allocated to women's work order.

I suggested that women only groups might be established for capacity building and conscientization in order to empower women both through greater self awareness and also through increased skills and knowledge in aspects of ministry to be able to participate effectively in decision-making and policy making in evangelism. I thought that women only engendered Bible studies might increase the confidence of and equip women to challenge directly patriarchal interpretations of women's ministry from scripture. I suggested that women only prayer groups would help women at congregational level to find a voice to express the pain of their oppression before one another and before God.

Women engaging in engendered theological education at congregation level would gain the knowledge and skills to challenge patriarchy in their own lives. At basic TEE level women might develop their critique of patriarchy and also begin to explore women's ministry. Study at higher levels will equip women for lay leadership and ordination. I argued that in ordained ministry roles women will then be able to influence others in their congregations towards the liberative readings of scripture that they had encountered in order to challenge aspects of patriarchy. Women should also engage in postgraduate theological education in order to become eligible to be tutors in seminaries in order to ensure that engendered theological education and training for ordination is introduced there and shared with male ordination candidates to begin a process of transformation among them.

Finally in chapter 6, I argued that workshops at congregation level could be used to help women to understand, for example, both the importance and significance of women's ordination, and the skills needed for speaking in public. At synod and national level, workshops on, for example, assertiveness, making an argument, public speaking, project management and management and finance would help women to speak in public, to contribute effectively to decision-making and policy making

meetings in evangelism and to build confidence in their eligibility for senior management positions in ministry in the EECMY.

I ended chapter 6 by acknowledging the enormity of the task of transforming women's ministry in the EECMY and the importance of accepting that changes may consist of small steps, that continuing the struggle to challenge patriarchal attitudes and practices towards women in ministry is vital, that progress will be slow and that the journey to equality and mutuality with men in ministry is a long one. However, I emphasised that the biblical texts of Gal. 3: 28 and Gen 1:27 are clear, that Friere's principle of conscientization has proven its effectiveness and that women travelling together in partnership are immensely powerful. I said that for these reasons, I have hope that transformation will be achieved.

The journey of the thesis is therefore at an end. I have completed what I set out to do, to investigate the role and status of women in ministry in the holistic ministry of the EECMY. I have shown how women's role and status in ministry is affected at almost every step by cultural limitations and theological barriers, so that they are silent/ced and marginalised. I have been privileged to listen to their voices and to hear stories not only of marginalisation but also of courage, and from men I have heard both opposition and encouragement to women. It has been encouraging to learn that the seeds of women's liberation are already identifiable in some interviews and that some of the practical strategies for responding to patriarchy are already in existence. The thesis is ended, but in truth, the journey is only just beginning.

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Appendix -1

Questionnaires

Some information about yourself:

Personal Profile: Name_____

Age: 30-40, 41-60 (underline the correct answer)

Place of birth _____

Marital status: Married/ single (underline the correct answer)

Level of education: Diploma, above 1st Degree, Literate

Position: Synod male leadership, Synod women leadership,
Parish leader, Congregation elders, and ordinary church
members (underline the correct answer)

Employment_____

A. Ministry

1. What is ministry in the context of the EECMY? Please indicate **yes** or **no** in questions 1 & 2:

- a) Service....
- b) Calling
- c) Liberating
- d) Holistic...

2. How do you understand ministry?

- a) Inclusive....
- b) Exclusive...
- c) Can be both...

B. Women and Leadership

1. Are women involved in leadership?

- a) Yes...
- b) Not always...
- c) Not at all ...

2. If your answer is 'not always' or 'not at all' what is a reason? (You may circle more than 1)

- a) Cultural ...
- b) Low level of education...
- c) Lack of theological training...
- d) Religious problem...

3. If yes, to what extent can women be engaged in leadership?

- a) At eldership...
- b) At executive positions...
- c) Leading women's office ...
- d) Do not know ...

4. Are women visible in leadership of the EECMY holistic ministry?

- a) Yes...
- b) Not very often....
- c) Not at all...

5. Are women visible in theology and Church?

- a) Yes...
- b) No....
- c) Not always...

6. If women are not visible in theology and church can you indicate the reasons?

- a) Cultural influences...
- b) EOC influences...
- c) Low level of education...
- d) Family responsibility...

7. What are the attitudes of your Synod towards women's leadership?

- a) Good...
- b) Very good ...
- c) Not clear ...

d) I do not know...

8. If the attitudes of your synod is not clear can you give reasons?

a) Cultural problem ...

b) Religious (EOC) problem ...

c) Natural problem (as woman)...

9. Does your home (local) congregation or parish allow women to preach from the pulpit?

a) Yes ...

b) No ...

c) Do not know...

10. Do you see any difference between women's preaching and men's preaching

a) No difference...

b) Yes there is a considerable difference...

c) Do not know ...

11. Do women formally lead liturgical Worship Services in your Congregation on Sunday?

a) Yes, often

b) Yes, sometimes ...

c) No, never ...

12. Is there any policy decision on participation of women in leadership?

a) Yes...

b) No....

c) Do not know...

13. Have they been implemented at all Synods?

a) Yes...

b) No...

c) At some Synods...

d) At grass roots levels...

14. If your answer is no, what was the problem?

- a) The member has not understood...
- b) Cultural problem...
- c) Women should be at home...

C. Women's involvement in the ministry of evangelism

1. In your experience do women participate in the Evangelism Ministry?

- a) Yes...
- b) Not very often ...
- c) Not at all....
- d) Do not know....

2. What is the representation of women in Evangelism Ministry?

- a) Few in number...
- b) Many women ...
- c) I do not know...

3. In what ways do women support the evangelism outreach?

- a) By hospitality ...
- b) By contributing money ...
- c) By offering their personal houses for gathering ...

4. How are women involved in evangelistic outreach?

- a) By witnessing to neighbours ...
- b) By witnessing to their colleagues in their office ...
- c) They do not involve in it ...

5. Are there any examples in the Bible that women are called to such ministry?

- a) Yes ...
- b) No ...
- c) I do not know ...

6. In which areas of ministry do women participate in your congregation regularly?

Indicate all that apply.

- a) Hospitality...
- b) Reading the scripture...
- c) Children's Sunday school teaching ...

D. Involvement of women in ordained ministry

1. For whom is the ordination of women an issue?

- a) Issue for the church...
- b) Women's issue...
- c) Theological issue.....

2. Has your congregation extended any calling to ordain women yet?

- a) Yes...
- b) No...
- c) It is planned...

3. Has your Synod ordained women yet?

- a) Yes...
- b) It is planned...
- c) No...
- d) Do not know

4. If your answer to question 3 is 'yes', how many ordained women are in your Synod so far?

- a) One...
- b) Two:
- c) More than two:

5. If your answer to question 3 was 'no' why?

6. In your Synod, is ordained ministry considered to be:

- a) Of greater value than other ministries of the church? ...
- b) Of equal value with other ministries of the church?
- c) Of less value than other ministries of the church?

7. Can women lead liturgical services?

- a) Yes...
- b) No...
- c) It is not practised yet...

8. If your answer is 'no' can you give reasons?

9. Is there any policy decision on involvement of women in ordained ministry?

- a) Yes...
- b) No....
- c) Do not know...

10. If your answer was 'yes' has the decision been implemented in your Synod?

- a) Yes...
- b) No...
- c) It is planned ...

11. If your answer was 'no' what are the reasons?

- a) Cultural influence...
- b) Lack of theological training...
- c) Lack of calling to this ministry...
- d) EOC influences...

E. Involvement of women in Decision-making meeting

1. Do you support the principle of women' involvement in decision-making meetings?

- a) Yes...
- b) No...

c) Do not know...

2. If your answer to the previous question is 'no', can you give reasons?

.....

3. Are women visible in executive positions at all levels?

a) Yes...

b) No...

c) Do not know...

4. How would you describe the approach of your Church community towards women's leadership?

a) Good...

b) Very good...

c) Do not know...

5. In your experience, where do women serve as chairperson?

a) Audit committee...

b) Youth committee...

c) Diakonia committee...

6. Is there any policy decision on participation of women on decision-making bodies?

a) Yes...

b) No...

c) I do not know...

7. Have the decisions been implemented in your Synod?

a) Yes...

b) No...

c) Do not know...

8. If the decisions have not been implemented can you give reasons?

a) The members have not understood...

- b) Cultural barriers...
- c) Leadership is men's role...

9. Are women silent on decision-making bodies of the EECMY ?

- a) Yes...
- b) No...
- c) They speak sometimes...

10. If your answer is 'yes' what is the reason?

- a) Theological problem
- b) Cultural problem
- c) Lack of education...

11. Is women's voice heard in decision-making meeting of the EECMY?

- a) Yes...
- b) Not very often...
- c) No...
- d) Do not know...

12. If women's voice is not heard in meetings, can you give reasons?

- a) Cultural issues...
- b) EOC influences...
- c) Personal low self esteems...

13. Are women visible on decision-making bodies of the EECMY?

- a) Yes...
- b) No...
- c) Do not know ...

Would you give me your comments on the questionnaires?

Total: 46 questions

Thank you all for your contributions.

Bekure Daba

July-August 2007 & July-August 2008

Appendix-2

Detailed breakdown of questionnaires completed.

| Synod | Q.com | M | Ord m | ord | LL | Ev | F | Ord m | ord | LL | Ev | ELd | |
|-------|-------|-----|-------|-----|----|----|----|-------|-----|----|----|-----|--|
| COS | | 12 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 18 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | |
| Pr | | 30 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | |
| CON | | 83 | 27 | 15 | 19 | 22 | 31 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 11 | |
| Total | | 125 | 39 | 27 | 26 | 33 | 55 | 20 | 3 | 16 | 5 | 11 | |

Synods (including Central Office) are referred to by the code 'COS' and a number between 1 and 7.

Congregations are referred to by the code 'CON'.

Interview respondents are referred to as 'I' and a number between 1 and 35.

Appendix-3a

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| How questionnaires | |
| were distributed | |
| | |
| COS 3 | |
| Office | 5 |
| Parish 1 | 2 |
| Parish 2 | 2 |
| Parish 3 | 2 |
| Congregation 1 | 8 |
| Congregation 2 | 8 |
| Congregation 3 | 8 |
| Total | 35 |

This is a sample of the distribution of questionnaires in one synod (COS 3) which can be used for all the six synods because all get equal distribution.

Appendix-3b

| All questionnaires | Distributed | | | Completed | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-----|----|-----------|-----|----|
| | Total | M | F | Total | M | F |
| | 210 | 150 | 60 | 180 | 125 | 55 |

This shows the total number of questionnaires distributed and completed across all six synods

Appendix 4

Findings from the questionnaires (NB numbers in brackets are percentages)

A Q1 What is ministry?

| No of Responses: | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Or. Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|----------|--------|--------|----------|---------|--------|-------------------|---------|---------|
| Service | Service | 5 (42) | 7 (38) | | 12 (40) | 1 (16) | | 32 (39) | 6 (19) |
| Calling | | 3 (25) | 8 (44) | | 11 (36) | 5 (83) | | 43 (52) | 18 (58) |
| Liberation | | | | | 5 (17) | | | 5 (6) | 11 (35) |
| Holistic | holistic | 4 (33) | 3 (17) | | 2 (7) | | | 3 (4) | 2 (6) |
| Total | 12 | 18 | | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q2 How do you understand ministry?

| No of Responses: | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------|----------|---------|--------|---------------|---------|---------|
| Inclusive | | 7 (58) | 3 (17) | | 16 (53) | 4 (67) | | 55 (66) | 16 (52) |
| Exclusive | | 3 (25) | 6 (33) | | 10 (33) | 2 (3) | | 18 (22) | 4 (13) |
| Can be both | | 2 (16) | 9 (50) | | 4 (13) | | | 10 (12) | 11 (35) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

B. Involvement of women in lay leadership

Q 1. Are women involved in lay leadership?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------|---------|--------|---------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|---------|
| Yes | | 5(42) | 2(11) | | 13 | 1(17) | | 13(17) | 5 |
| Not always | | 7 (58) | 16 | | 15(50) | 5(83) | | 54(65) | 26 (84) |
| Not at all | | | 15 (83) | | 14(47) | | | 16(19) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q 2. 1 If women do not participate in liturgical lay leadership can you give reason?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|---------|--------|---------------|---------|---------|
| Cultural | | 9(75) | 1(6) | | 8 (27) | 5 (83) | | 35 (42) | 13(42) |
| a) Low level of education | | 1(8) | 3(17) | | | | | 6 (7) | |
| b) Lack of education | | | 1(6) | | 3(10) | | | 7(8) | |
| c) Lack of theological training | | 2(17) | 12(67) | | 18 (60) | 1 (17) | | 22 (26) | 15 (48) |
| d)Religious problem | | | 3(17) | | 1 (3) | | | 13 (16) | 3 (10) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q3. To what extent? Can women be engaged in leadership?

| | Off ice s | M | F | Par ish es | M | F | Congre gations | M | F |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------------|--------|-------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| a)At eldership | | 2(17) | 2(11) | | 5(17) | 2(33) | | 12(38) | 13(50) |
| b)at executive positions | | | | | | | | | 26(83) |
| c) leading women's office | | 10 (83) | 16 (89) | | 25(83) | 4(67) | | 71(86) | 28(90) |
| d) Do not know | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 12 | | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q4. Are women visible in leadership of the EECMY holistic ministry?

| | Offic es | M | F | Pari shes | M | F | Congr egatio ns | M | F |
|----------------------|-------------|-------|------------|--------------|--------|-----------|-----------------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes | | 4(33) | | | 5(17) | | | 13(16) | 5(16) |
| b) Not very often | | | 3 (17) | | 3(10) | 2(33) | | | 5(16) |
| c) Not at all | | 2(17) | 15 (83) | | 19(63) | 4 (67) | | 33(40) | 21(68) |
| Total | | 6 | 18 | | 30 | | | 83 | 31 |

Q5. Are women visible in theology and Church?

| | Off ice s | M | F | Paris hes | M | F | Congre gations | M | F |
|------------------|-----------------|-------|------------|--------------|------------|-------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes: | | 5(42) | 1(6) | | 13 (43) | 2(33) | | 17(20) | 6(19) |
| b) No: | | | 15 (83) | | 7 (23) | 4(67) | | 24(28) | 19(61) |
| c) Not always | | 7(58) | 2(11) | | 10 (33) | | | 42(51) | 6(19) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q6. If women are not visible in theology and church can you indicate the reasons?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|---------------------------|---------|------------|------------|----------|------------|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| a) Cultural influences | | 11 (92) | 13 (72) | | 12 (40) | 2(33) | | 9(11) | 5(16) |
| b) EOC influences | | 1(8) | 3(17) | | 9 (30) | | | 67(81) | 4(13) |
| c) Low level of education | | | 2(11) | | 9 (30) | | | | |
| d) Family responsibility | | | | | | 4(67) | | 7(8) | 10 (32) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | | | 83 | 31 |

Q7. What are the attitudes of your Synod towards women's leadership?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------|------------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| a) Good | | 2(17) | 3 (17) | | 13(43) | 2(33) | | 15(18) | 9 (29) |
| b) Very good | | 2(17) | 2 (11) | | 2(7) | | | 67 | 1(3) |
| c) Not clear | | 8(67) | 13 (72) | | 15(50) | 467 | | 41(49) | 16 (51) |
| d) I do not know | | | | | | | | 21(25) | 5(16) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q8. If your answer is 'not clear' can you give reasons?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|---|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Cultural problem | | 78 | 15(83) | | 17(57) | | | 35(42) | 18(56) |
| b) Religious (EOC) | | 5(41) | 3(17) | | 13(43) | | | 25(30) | 13(42) |
| c) Natural problem (as woman)... | | | | | | | | 23(27) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | | | 83 | 31 |

Q9. Does your home (local) congregation or parish allow women to preach from the pulpit?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------|---------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes: | | 4 (33) | 3 (17) | | 13 (43) | 1 (17) | | 11(13) | 4(13) |
| b) No: | | 5(42) | 12 (67) | | 15 (50) | 5(83) | | 56(67) | 27(87) |
| c) Do not know | | 3(25) | 3 (17) | | 2(7) | | | 16(83) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q10. Do you see any difference between women's preaching and men's preaching

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|---|---------|-------|------------|----------|----|-----------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) No difference... | | 8(66) | 12 (67) | | 17 | 1 (17) | | 53 (64) | 13 (42) |
| b) Yes there is a considerable difference | | 4(33) | 6(33) | | 13 | 5 (83) | | 23 (27) | 18 (58) |
| c) Do not know: | | | | | | | | 7(8) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q11. Do women formally lead liturgical Worship Services in your Congregation?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|-------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes often | | 3(25) | 5(28) | | 12(40) | 2(33) | | 23(27) | 5(16) |
| b) Yes, sometimes | | 2(17) | 2(11) | | 5(17) | 4(67) | | 15(18) | 7(23) |
| c) Never | | 7(58) | 11(61) | | 13(43) | | | 45(52) | 19(61) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | | | | |

Q12. Is there any policy decision on participation of women on the involvement of women in lay leadership?

| Responses | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|---------------|---------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|------------|---------------|---------|--------|
| a)Yes | | 12 (100) | 18 (100) | | 30 (100) | 6 (100) | | 53 (64) | 12(39) |
| b)No | | | | | | | | 5 (6) | 8 (26) |
| c)Do not know | | | | | | | | 25(47) | 11(35) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q13. Have they been implemented at all Synods?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------------|---------|------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------|---------------|--------|------------|
| a)Yes | | 1(17) | 2(11) | | 2 (7) | 1 (17) | | | |
| b) No | | | 15 (83) | | 12 (40) | 5 (83) | | 47(57) | 20 (65) |
| c)At some Synods | | 11 (92) | 16 (89) | | 4 (13) | | | 21(25) | 4(13) |
| d) at grassroots level | | | | | 12(40) | | | 15(18) | 7(23) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

14. If not, what was the problem?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------|-----------|----------|------------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) The member has not understood | | 11 (92) | 4 (22) | | 21 (70) | 4(67) | | 47(57) | 19(61) |
| b) Cultural problem | | 1(8) | 2 (11) | | 9(30) | 2(33) | | 31(37) | 12(39) |
| c) Women should be at home | | | | | | | | 5(6) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

C. Women's involvement in the ministry of evangelism

Q1. In your experience do women participate in the Evangelism Ministry?

| | Of fic es | M | F | Par ish es | M | F | Co ngr ega tio ns | M | F |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|--------|------------------|------------|-------|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
| a)Yes | | 1(8) | 2(11) | | 5 (17) | 1(17) | | 8(10) | 2(6) |
| b) Not very often | | 3(25) | 4(22) | | 3 (30) | | | 21(25) | 3(10) |
| c)Not at all | | 8(67) | 12(67) | | 22 (73) | 5(83) | | 54(65) | 26(84) |
| d) Do not know.... | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q2. What is the representation of women in Evangelism Ministry?

| | Offic es | M | F | Paris hes | M | F | Congre gations | M | F |
|---------------------|-------------|-------|--------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------------|--------|------------|
| a) Few in number | | 9(75) | 16(89) | | 25 (83) | 6 (100) | | 59(71) | 26 (83) |
| b) Many women | | 3(25) | | | 3 (10) | | | 15(18) | 5(16) |
| c) I do not know | | | 2(11) | | 27 (90) | | | 9(10) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q3. In what ways do women support the evangelism outreach?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|--|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| 1)By hospitality | | 8(67) | 4(22) | | 8(27) | 2(33) | | 23(28) | 6(19) |
| b)By contributing money | | 3(25) | 11(61) | | 19(63) | 4(67) | | 52(63) | 23(74) |
| c) By offering their personal houses for gathering | | 1(8) | 3(17) | | 3(10) | | | 13(16) | 2(6) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q 4. How women are involved in evangelistic outreach?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|---|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a)By witnessing to neighbours | | 5(42) | 15(83) | | 21(70) | 4(67) | | 53(64) | 19(61) |
| b)By witnessing to their colleagues in their office | | 7(58) | 3(17) | | 9(30) | 2(7) | | 23(28) | 12(39) |
| c) they do not involve in it | | | | | | | | 7(8) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q5. Are there any examples in the Bible that women are called to such ministry?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|----------|--------|--------|---------------|--------|------------|
| a) Yes | | 12 (100) | 18 (100) | | 18(60) | 6(100) | | 65(78) | 25 (81) |
| b) Not | | | | | 5(17) | | | 11(13) | 6 (19) |
| c) I do not know | | | | | 7(23) | | | 7(8) | |
| Total | | | | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q6. In which areas of ministry do women participate in your congregation regularly?

Indicate all that apply.

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-----------|-------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) Hospitality | | 5(42) | 8(44) | | 12 (40) | 5(83) | | 42(51) | 19 (61) |
| b) Reading the scripture | | 1 (8) | 3(17) | | 8(27) | | | 19 (23) | 8 (26) |
| c) Children's Sunday school teaching | | 6 (50) | 7(39) | | 10 (33) | 1 (16) | | 22 (27) | 4 (13) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

D. Involvement of women in ordained ministry

Q1. For whom is the ordination of women an issue?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|-------------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|-------|--------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Issue for the church | | 8(67) | 13(72) | | 1(8) | 6(100) | | 4(5) | 22(71) |
| b) For Women | | | 2(11) | | 5(17) | | | 3(4) | |
| c) Theological issue | | 4(33) | 3(17) | | 7(23) | | | 35(42) | 9(29) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q2 Has your congregation extended any calling to ordain women yet?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------|-------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes | | 2(17) | 5(27) | | 5(17) | 2(33) | | 5(6) | 3(10) |
| b) No | | 5(47) | 8(44) | | 22(73) | 4(67) | | 60(72) | 18(58) |
| c) Not at all | | | | | | | | | |
| d) It is planned | | 5(47) | 5(28) | | 4(13) | | | 18(21) | 10(32) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | | | 83 | 31 |

Q3. Has your Synod ordained women yet?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes | | 2(17) | 2(17) | | 1(3) | 2(33) | | 5(6) | 6(19) |
| b) It is planned | | 3(25) | 13(72) | | 12(40) | 3(50) | | 32(39) | 4(13) |
| c) No | | 7(58) | 3(17) | | 15(50) | 1(17) | | 45(54) | 21(68) |
| d) Do not know | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q4. If women have been ordained at your synod, how many ordained women are there?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------|-------|----------|------|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| a) More than one | | 4(33) | 6(33) | | 1(3) | 1(17) | | 2(2) | 2(6) |
| b) Two | | | 3(17) | | 2(7) | 1(17) | | 22(27) | 3(10) |
| c) More than two | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

5. If your answer to question 3 was 'no' why?

32 males answered by saying there were no women theologians and the 18 female respondents answered by saying that the congregations did not extend calling for women theologians.

Q 6. In your Synod, is ordained ministry considered to be:

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|--|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|--------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Of greater value than other ministries of the church? | | 3(25) | 3(17) | | 5(17) | | | 26(84) | 3(10) |
| b) Of equal value with other ministries? | | 9(75) | 15(83) | | 25(83) | 6(100) | | 57(69) | 28(90) |
| c) Of less value than other ministries of the church? | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | |

Q7. Can women lead liturgical services?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|---------------------------|---------|-----------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|---------|--------|
| a) Yes | | 2 (17) | 3 (17) | | 6(20) | 2 (33) | | 22 (27) | 8 (26) |
| b) No | | 4(34) | 15 (83) | | 8(27) | 4 (67) | | 35 (42) | 23(74) |
| c) It is not accepted yet | | 6 (50) | | | 16 (53) | | | 26 (31) | 0 |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | | | 83 | 31 |

Q 8 If not 'no' can you give reasons?

Q9 Is there any policy decision on involvement of women in ordained ministry

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------|---------|-------------|-------------|----------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) Yes | | 12 (100) | 18 (100) | | 21 (70) | 6(100) | | 48 (58) | 22 (71) |
| b) No | | | | | 8 (27) | | | 29 (45) | 3 (10) |
| c) Do not know | | | | | 1(3) | | | 6(7) | 6 (19) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q10. If the decision has not been implemented in your Synod can you mention the reason?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------|------------|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) members have not heard about it | | 5(42) | 10 (56) | | 7(23) | 4 (67) | | 39(47) | 23(74) |
| b) It is | | 6(50) | 5 (28) | | 15 (50) | 2 (33) | | 28(34) | 8(28) |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|------|-------|--|-------|---|--|--------|----|
| planned | | | | | | | | | |
| c) Do not know | | 1(8) | 3(17) | | 8(27) | | | 16(19) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q11. What are other reasons for not implementing the policy decisions?

| Responses | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Cultural influence | | 8(67) | 9(50) | | 3(10) | 2(33) | | 36(43) | 12(39) |
| b) Lack of theological training | | 3(25) | 5(28) | | 6(20) | | | 21(25) | 15(48) |
| c) Lack of calling to this ministry | | 1(8) | 4(22) | | 2(7) | 3(50) | | 30(36) | 5(16) |
| d) EOC influences | | 3(25) | 2(11) | | 4(13) | 1(17) | | 11(13) | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

E. Involvement of women in Decision-making meeting

Q1. Do you support the principle of women' involvement in decision-making meeting

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------|---------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Yes | | 5(42) | 9(50) | | 8(27) | 3(50) | | 51(61) | 26(84) |
| b) No | | 6(50) | 5(28) | | 6(20) | 2(33) | | 32(39) | 5(16) |
| c) Do not know | | 1(8) | 4(22) | | 3(10) | | | | 1(3) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q2. If your answer to Q1 is 'no', can you give reasons = only 6 male and 5 female respondents said 'no' in which their reasons were different. Three male said women do not speak on meetings. The other 6 male said women should at home and look after the family instead of spending time on meetings because they can do that. All women presented two main reasons saying that, we are afraid to speak in front of

men so we do not support the principle. The second reason was that the men do not listen to women therefore it is better to abolish the principle.

Q3. Are women visible in executive positions at all levels?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|-------------|---------|------------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|------------|--------|
| a) Yes | synod | 2 (17) | 1(6) | | 13(43) | 1(17) | | 5(6) | 2(6) |
| b) No | | 10 (83) | 17(94) | | 16(53) | 4(67) | | 67 (80) | 28(90) |
| Do not know | | | | | 1(3) | 1(17) | | 1(1) | 1(3) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q4. How would you describe the approach of your Church community towards women's leadership?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|------------|--------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) Good | | 8(67) | 13(72) | | 21 (70) | 4 (67) | | 56 (67) | 18 (58) |
| b) Very good | | 1(8) | 2(11) | | 8(27) | 2 (33) | | 22 (27) | 4(13) |
| c) Do not know | | 3(25) | 3(17) | | 1(3) | | | 7(8) | 9(29) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q5. In your experience, where do women serve as chairperson?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------------|---------|-------|------------|----------|------------|---|---------------|------------|------------|
| a)) Audit committee | | 2(17) | 1(8) | | 3 (10) | 0 | | 5(6) | 2(6) |
| b) Youth committee | | 8(67) | 13 (72) | | 15 (50) | 0 | | 53 (64) | 17 (55) |
| ... | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-------|-------|--|------------|--------|--|------------|------------|
| c) <i>Dikonia</i> Committee | | 2(17) | 5(28) | | 12 (40) | 1 (17) | | 26 (31) | 12 (39) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q6. Is there any policy decision on participation of women on decision-making bodies?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------------|----------|----------|-------------|--------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) Yes | | 12 (100) | 18 (100) | | 30 (100) | 6(100) | | 15 (18) | 24 (77) |
| b) No | | | | | | | | 20 (24) | 3(10) |
| c) I do not know | | | | | | | | 48 (58) | 5(16) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q7 Have the decisions been implemented in your Synod?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|--------|--------|----------|--------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) Yes | | 8 (67) | 3(17) | | 15(50) | | | 10 (12) | 19 (61) |
| b) No | | 4(33) | 15(83) | | 12(40) | 6 (100) | | 48 (83) | 11 (35) |
| c) I do not know | | | | | 3(10) | | | 23 (28) | 1(3) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q8 If the decisions have not been implemented can you give reasons?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|------------|------------|
| a) The members have not understood | | 9(75) | 5(28) | | 19(63) | 4(67) | | 54 (65) | 13 (42) |
| b) Cultural | | 2(17) | 13(72) | | 11(37) | 2(33) | | 29 | 8 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|----|----|--|----|---|--|------|------|
| barriers | | | | | | | | (35) | (26) |
| c) Leadership is men's role | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q9. Are women silent on decision-making bodies of the EECMY and Ethiopian society?

| | Office | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|-------------------------|--------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a)Yes | | 9(75) | 15(83) | | 21(70) | 5(83) | | 34(41) | 23(74) |
| b)No | | 1(8) | 2(11) | | 5(17) | 1(17) | | 16(19) | 1(3) |
| c) They speak some time | | 2(17) | 1(6) | | 4(13) | | | 33(40) | 7(23) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q10. If your answer is 'yes' what is the reason?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a) Theological problem | | 5(42) | 3(17) | | 9(30) | 5(83) | | 23(28) | 6(19) |
| b) Cultural problem | | 4(33) | 2(11) | | 12(40) | 1(17) | | 56(67) | 15(48) |
| c) Lack of education | | 3(25) | 13(72) | | 9(30) | | | 5(6) | 7(23) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q11. Is women's voice heard in decision-making meeting of the EECMY?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|------------------|---------|-------|--------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|--------|
| a)Yes | | 4(33) | 0(0) | | 6(20) | 2(33) | | 13(16) | 6(19) |
| b)Not very often | | 6(50) | 15(83) | | 18(60) | 4(67) | | 28(34) | 22(71) |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|-------|-----------|--|-----------|---|--|------------|-----------|
| c) No | | 2(17) | 3 (17) | | 6 (20) | | | 42 (51) | 3 (10) |
| d) Do not know | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Q12. If women's voice is not heard in meetings, can you give reasons?

| | Off ice s | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Con greg ation s | M | F |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------|------------|----------|------------|---|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| a) Cultural problem | | 7(58) | 13 (72) | | 15(50) | | | 55 (66) | 13 (42) |
| b) EOC influence | | 5(42) | 5 (28) | | 10 (33) | | | 25 (30) | 12 (39) |
| c) Personal low self-esteem | | | | | 6(20) | | | 3(4) | 6(19) |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | | | 83 | 31 |

13. Are women visible on decision-making bodies of the EECMY?

| | Offices | M | F | Parishes | M | F | Congregations | M | F |
|----------------|---------|-------|------------|----------|--------|-------|---------------|--------|------------|
| a) Yes | | 8(67) | 2(11) | | 25(83) | 5(83) | | 35(42) | 6(20) |
| b) No | | 4(33) | 16 (89) | | 5(17) | 1(17) | | 58(70) | 25 (81) |
| c) Do not know | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 12 | 18 | | 30 | 6 | | 83 | 31 |

Would you give me your comments on the questionnaires?

Total: 46 questions

Thank you all for your contributions.

Bekure Daba

July-August 2007 & July - August 2008

Appendix -5a

| Distribution of 35 Interviews across six synods | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------|------|
| Interview | COS1 | COS2 | COS3 | COS4 | COS5 | COS6 | COS7 | Total | % |
| <u>Sex</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| F | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 21 | 60% |
| M | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 14 | 40% |
| Total | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 35 | 100% |

Appendix 5b

| Number of Interviewees across all synods | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-----|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|
| | Res | | | | | | | | | | | | | To tal |
| COS1 | | M | Eld | O M | Ev | LL | Or | F | El | OM | Ev | LL | Or | |
| Off-2 | | 2 | | | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 5 |
| COS2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off-1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Par-1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Con-3 | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| COS3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off-1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| P-1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Con-3 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 2 | | 1 | | 1 | | 3 |
| COS4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off-1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Par-1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Con3 | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 3 |
| COS5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 2 |
| Par1 | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 2 |
| Con3 | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 3 |
| COS6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off-1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Par-1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Con -3 | | 1 | | | | 1 | | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | | 3 |
| COS7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Off-1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Par-1 | | | | | | | | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 3 |
| Con-3 | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Total | 35 | 14 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 21 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 35 |

Key

| | |
|----|-------------------------|
| El | Elders |
| Or | Ordained persons |
| Ev | Evangelist |
| OM | Ordinary Church members |
| LL | Lay leaders |

According to the information in table-4 the largest group of interviewees were female. The smallest group was male elders with only one representative. There were 5 male evangelist interviewees and 3 ordained male interviewees whereas there were only 2 male ordinary members who were interviewed.

Since women were my target group I deliberately interviewed more women than men in order to collect more data from them. The largest female interviewee groups were Ordinary Church members, the second largest were 4 elders holding the position of evangelists, and finally there were 3 female ordained interviewees and 3 lay leader interviewees.